

THE
RIG-VEDA and VEDIC
RELIGION

WITH
READINGS FROM THE VEDAS

BY
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CHRISTIAN LITERATURE SOCIETY FOR INDIA
LONDON AND MADRAS
1913

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ABOUT two years ago the writer was asked to prepare for the Christian Literature Society for India a revised edition of the late Dr. Murdoch's *Account of the Vedas* and consented to do so. But he soon found that no revision of that book, useful as it had been, could be made that would adequately represent modern knowledge and modern method of interpretation of the Veda. Consequently the present volume, though continuing all that was of permanent value in Dr. Murdoch's handbook, is a distinct and new treatment of the subject. But it makes no claim to be original. It is only a careful compilation of what is known of the life and religion and Hymns of Vedic times, and the bibliography and the footnotes will show to how many teachers the writer is, most gratefully, a debtor. He has ventured on independent statements only when reference is made to the influence of the Dravidian on the Aryan religion, or to the religious practices of Dravidians in South India at the present time—subjects on which he has had special opportunities of observation since 1892.

By the permission of Messrs. E. J. Lane & Co., Benares, the Readings from the Vedas are taken from the admirable series of translations of the Veda prepared by the late R. T. H. Griffith and published by that firm.

A. C. CLAYTON.

NOTE ON THE SPELLING AND PRONUNCIATION OF SANSKRIT WORDS

As this book is written for the average student-reader rather than for the specialist, technicalities have, as far as possible, been avoided, but the transliteration of Sanskrit words will generally be found to agree with the scheme accepted by the Geneva Congress of Orientalists and the Royal Asiatic Society.

Some knowledge of the Sanskrit alphabet is needed to grasp the sounds of letters distinguished by diacritical marks such as *n*, *ṛ*, *ṡ*. But the distinction between long and short vowels is more easy to observe. All vowels are pronounced in Italian fashion rather than in English, i.e. like the vowels in 'do, re, mi, fa' of the musical scale. Long vowels have been given in the text with a long mark over them, e.g. *Indrānī*, *Sūryā*.

The short vowel *a* is never pronounced like the *a* in 'that'. It has always a sound corresponding to the *a* in 'era'. For instance the first syllable in *Varuna* is pronounced something like the first syllable in the word 'current'.

Many Sanskrit names, like *Krishna*, *Rama*, *Sita* and words like *upanishad*, *rishi*, *veda*, *Rig-veda* have become so well-known that usually it has not seemed needful to insert diacritical marks in them.

THE RIG-VEDA
AND
VEDIC RELIGION

I THE ARYANS

IN the dawning time of history, somewhere in the lands beyond Afghanistan and north of Persia roamed bold tribes of fair complexioned men and women with their horses and cattle The
early Aryans
From stories that have come down to •

us about them, from words that they used which have still place in our speech, and from rites of worship still observed by many of their descendants to-day something can be known of their life and thoughts. They were a rough, brave, hardy, adventurous race, of honest and simple soul.

Some of them gradually limited their wanderings to Irān, the land of Persia. There they settled and there they stayed, becoming the ancestors of the Parsis now in India, and their speech became the old Zend language and their religion, with its sacred literature, the *Avesta* of Zoroaster, developed into Zoroastrianism.

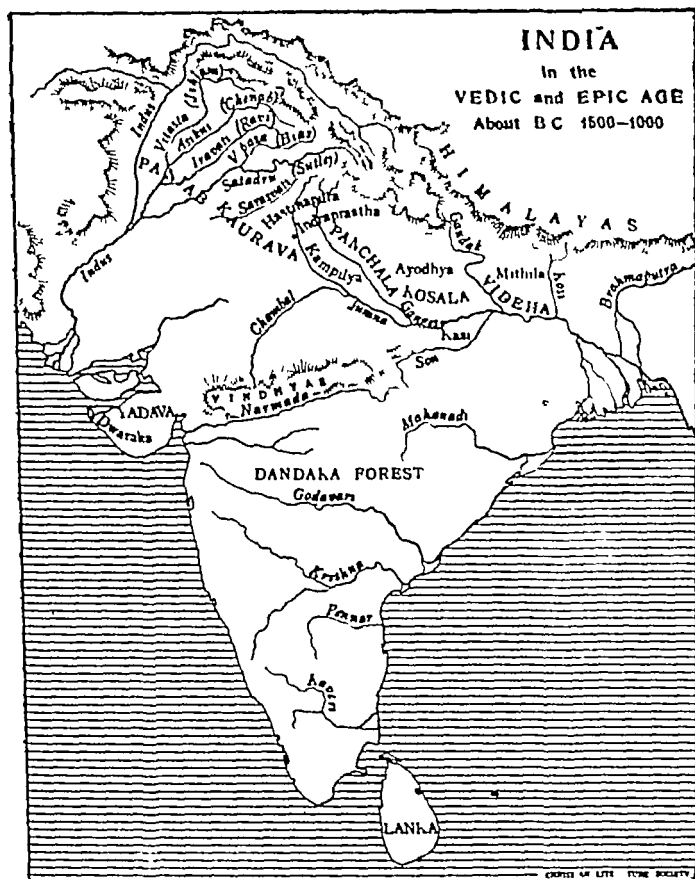
Others of these tribes, more daring, by long marches, and through many generations approached and entered India from the north-west. These were the men who called themselves 'Áryas', Aryans, a word meaning 'kinsmen' as distinct from the aboriginal tribes already dwelling in the land¹. And though much concerning them is obscure, not a little is evident, and to day it is

¹ MACDONNELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 152

possible to look back across the many centuries that separate us from those nomads and learn what manner of men they were. Having some conception of the men themselves, remembering that they were once alive, and vastly concerned with matters that fill men's lives, even to day, it will be possible to go on to some survey of their hymns and their beliefs, their hopes and their fears, their gods and their demons, not as to a dry study of abstractions but in hope of finding the vital beginnings of faiths that still sway the hearts of millions in India.

From the names of the rivers mentioned in their hymns it is clear that about the time that they were composed, the chief settlements of the
The home of the Aryans Aryans in India were in the neighbourhood of the Sindhu, the modern Indus, a river which after receiving the waters of its tributaries is so wide that people on one bank cannot see the opposite bank. The Himalayas would prevent them from turning towards the north, and it is thus clear that before they crossed the Yamuna, the modern Jumna, and made their way to the Ganges, the Aryans dwelt mainly in East Kabulistan and the Panjab. The Saraswatī was their southern boundary during that period.

As to other races that were in the land there is little information in the hymns of the Aryans and the science of ethnology has to help us. From it we learn that before the Aryans came India was sparsely peopled by some of the races that are now often called 'jungle tribes'. Among them the majority would be Dravidians. The Gonds, Bhils and Santāls are modern



survivors of those races. Some were very humble in the scale of humanity burying their dead in the cells made of stone-slabs, called *Kistvaens* by scientists and 'Pāṇḍava vīdu'—the houses of the Pāṇḍava brothers when in exile—by the Tamil people of the south to this day. Those in the south were never so subject to the Aryans as the tribes of the north and grew into the

powerful and civilized Tamil and Telugu nations, but there is no hint of this in the Rig-veda. There these ab-

The Dasvus origines are named 'Dasvu' 'destroyers' or 'Dāsa', or 'injurious'. Their skins were much darker than those of the Aryans and so they were stigmatized as 'black' or 'black-skins'. From the shape of their broad noses they were called 'goat-nosed'. They possessed herds, they had strongholds called 'pur'. Those who were captured were made slaves, and the very word 'dāsa' came to mean 'slave' in later Sanskrit and cognate languages. The references to their religion describe them as offering no sacrifices, being unbelievers in the gods of the Aryans, and thus grievously impious. There are two passages in which they are called *śiśna devah*, 'whose god is the phallus' (*Rig veda* vii 21 5, x 99 3), and it will be remembered that the phallus, as the linga, came to be the chief symbol of the god Siva in later Hinduism¹.

From the first these Dasvus were the enemies of the Aryans, but their demon worship greatly affected the Aryans, especially in the simpler domestic religion that has always been that of the ordinary folk.

Probably the conditions of climate and soil were then much as they are now and the Aryans who had lived in tents while they were nomads became dwellers in houses. The roofs of these houses were of long bamboos laid on rafters supported by pillars or corner posts. The spaces between the pillars were filled in with straw or reeds, tied in bundles. In places where stone was

¹ MACDONNELL *Sanskrit Literature* p. 153 *Vedic Index* ii 382 Dr Muir does not agree in this interpretation. *Sanskrit Texts* iv 411

readily obtainable it was sometimes used, and Indra is said to have destroyed a hundred cities of stone. The roof would be of thatch, and the various timbers were fastened together with bars, pegs, ropes and thongs. The house had a door fastened by a strap. A number of these houses made a village. Such villages were near to streams or rivers for the sake of crops and cattle. There were ramparts and ditches to protect the village from enemies or from flood. But there were no cities, if by city is meant a collection of houses near to each other surrounded by a wall.

Aryan houses

Bread, milk and products from milk, such as butter, cakes of flour and butter, vegetables and fruits were the usual articles of food. But meat, roasted or boiled, was eaten, though probably only at great feasts and family gatherings. The late Dr Rajendralala Mitra occupied the highest rank among Indian scholars, and in his *Indo-Aryans*, he has a chapter headed, 'Beef in Ancient India'. It begins as follows

Food

The title of this paper will, doubtless, prove highly offensive to most of my countrymen, but the interest attached to the inquiry in connexion with the early social history of the Aryan race on this side of the Himalaya, will, I trust, plead my excuse. The idea of beef—the flesh of the earthly representative of the divine Bhagavatī—as an article of food is so shocking to the Hindus, that thousands over thousands of the more orthodox among them never repeat the counterpart of the word in their vernaculars, and many and dire have been the sanguinary conflicts which the shedding of the blood of cows has caused in this country. And yet it would seem that there was a time when

not only no compunctions, visitings of conscience, had a place in the mind of the people in slaughtering cattle—when not only the meat of that animal was actually esteemed a valuable aliment—when not only was it a mark of generous hospitality, as among the ancient Jews, to slaughter the ‘fatted calf’ in honour of respected guests—but when a supply of beef was deemed an absolute necessity by pious Hindus in their journey from this to another world, and a cow was invariably killed to be burnt with the dead

Dr Rajendralala Mitra quotes Colebrooke’s opinion as follows

It seems to have been anciently the custom to slay a cow on that occasion (the reception of a guest) and a guest was therefore called a *goghna*, or ‘cow killer’. In the *Uttara Rāma Charitra* the venerable old poet and hermit Valmiki, when preparing to receive his brother sage Vasista, the author of one of the original law books (*Smritis*) which regulates the religious life of the people, and a prominent character even in the Vedas, slaughtered a lot of calves expressly for the entertainment of his guests. Vasista, in his turn, likewise slaughtered the ‘fatted calf’ when entertaining Viśvamitra, Janaka, Satānanda, Jamadagnya, and other sages and friends ¹

Cows and oxen were sacrificed on certain occasions even in later Vedic times and on such occasions priest and sacrificer would eat part of the flesh of the victim ²

Salt is not mentioned in the hymns, though it abounds in the Northern Panjab

For drink the Aryans used *surā*, a brandy made from corn or barley, and *soma*, the sap of a herb of the

¹ *Indo Aryans*, vol 1 pp 356-8

² See Section v *The Sacrifices of the Aryans*, also MACDONNELL *Vedic Index* II 145

Sarcostemma species, which on account of its stimulating and exciting character was deified

The Aryans kept herds of cattle and horses. Goats, buffaloes and camels are mentioned. There are many prayers for these in the hymns, especially for cows that yield the white milk from which mead and butter, 'the favourite food of gods and men', were prepared. An Aryan called his daughter *dūhitri* or milkmaid, and the word *gopā*, cowkeeper, came to mean any protector.

Agriculture was the principal industry. Plough and harrow, mattock and hoe were used, and sometimes water was conducted in irrigation channels. There were two harvests in the year, especially for barley. The grain was threshed, the chaff was winnowed away, the corn was ground in a mill, and bread was made from the flour. Agriculture was more important than hunting with the bow, or capturing game with snares, or than fishing.

Agriculture

Wood-workers, who had tools such as hatchets and planes, built wagons and war-chariots, or carved wooden cups. There were tanners who made leather from the hide of slaughtered cattle, and manufactured it into waterbottles, bow-strings, slings and the like. There were workers in metal, smiths who made weapons and rims for the wheels of carts, and potters. Women spun and wove wool and made garments. There were even barbers.

Artisans

Trade existed as barter, and the value of goods was calculated at so many cows. Golden ornaments were beginning to be used. Goldsmiths are spoken of and usurers are mentioned. The Babylonian *manā* of gold seems to have been called *manā* in Sanskrit which may

be an indication of very early intercourse between India and the western Semitic races. Ships are mentioned

The family was the unit and the father of the family was its high-priest and head, and controlled the worship

The father of the ancestors of the family in all details. He knew the peculiar ritual which was traditional in his family, and which had to be maintained unchanged, if the favour of the dead was to be retained. He alone had the power to pass on the rites to his son. The reverence and the power which his priestly position brought him made him supreme in the household. He had full power over his wife and his young children, and his grown-up sons were under his authority. The property of the family was altogether in his hands. This was the source of the paternal authority (*patria potestas*) of the Roman father, and of the prominent place held by the father in Greece, Persia, India, and among Teutonic and Slavonic peoples as well. This type of family, which is known as the patriarchal, succeeded an earlier and less developed type.¹

Youths and maidens saw each other at festivals. Should the youth be attracted he generally but not always

Marriage asked for the maiden in marriage from her father through a friend. It was considered improper for the marriages of younger sons or daughters to be arranged before those of their elder brothers and sisters. If the suitor was approved he occasionally had to purchase his bride by giving gifts to her father. A dowry was sometimes given with the bride. The marriage was performed in the presence of

¹ FARQUHAR *Primer of Hinduism* pp. 5-6

both families and their friends in the house of the bride's parents. The fire was kindled on the domestic altar and the bride was handed by her father to her husband. The bridegroom took hold of the right-hand of the bride with his right-hand repeating the formula

By thy right hand for happiness I take thee,
That thou may'st reach old age with me, thy husband.
Aryaman, Bhaga, Savitar, Puramdhi,
Gave thee to me to rule our home together

Rig-veda \ 85 36

After repeating other verses he led his bride round the altar, from left to right (*pradakshina*), and she was then his wife, and he her husband. Then followed a feast and the wife was taken to her husband's house on a wagon decked with flowers and drawn by white cattle. Here hymns or parts of hymns were chanted, full of goodwill to the wife, and her authority was solemnly declared

Here now remain, nor ever part,
Enjoy the whole expanse of life,
With son and grandson jovous sport
Be glad in heart within your house
So rule and govern in thy home
Over thy husband's parents both,
His brother and his sister, too,
Are subject likewise there to thee

Rig-veda \ 85 42, 46

Clearly the Aryan bride was of an age fitting her to be wife and mother and mistress of a home when she was married. In the home the wife took part with her husband in the daily sacrifice.

Some kings and nobles might have more than one wife. The two Asvins had together one wife, Sūryā,

the daughter of the sun god But the ordinary condition was 'a united pair, with one heart and one mind, free from discord' The marriage of blood relations was thought wrong The birth of a daughter is nowhere sought, but sons are earnestly desired

There is no evidence in the Rig-veda that when her husband died the Aryan widow had to burn herself on

Widows his funeral pyre The eighteenth hymn of the tenth Book of Rig veda refers to the death of a husband, to the vicissitude of life and to the funeral ceremonies The seventh verse runs as follows in Kaegi's translation ¹

The women here, still happy wives, not widowed, shall come and bring rich oil and precious ointment, and tearless, blooming, rich adorned, may they first approach the resting place of the departed

Rig-veda \ 18 7

The words 'may they first approach the place' are a translation of the Sanskrit words

ā rohantu yonim agre

By the most awful crime in the history of literature this phrase was altered in later times It then read

ā rohantu yonim agnēh

meaning 'let them enter the place of fire', and by this terrible falsification the verse was made to justify the burning of widows

The exact opposite was the fact Among the early Aryans the widow might marry again The very next verse of the same hymn calls on the widow to rise from beside the bier or pyre and take the hand of her new

¹ KAEGI *Rig veda* p 77

husband, 'doubtless', says Prof Macdonnell (*Sanskrit Literature*, p 126) 'a brother of the deceased, in accordance with an ancient marriage custom' of which a trace remained among the Hebrews I quote his translation

Rise up, come to the world of life, O woman,
Thou liest here by one whose soul has left him
Come thou hast now entered upon the wifehood
Of this thy lord who takes thy hand and woos thee.

Rig-veda \ 18 8

There may have been instances of widow burning in early Arvan times but it was during a much later period (A D 650-1200) that the custom of burning a widow with her husband's body came gradually into force Such a widow is highly praised in the *Garuda Purāna*, she was called a *satī* (pronounced *sittē*) emphatically a 'good' woman Hence the modern name of the custom At the same time it became customary for a widow who did not ascend her husband's pyre to live a life of asceticism and privation, and precepts sanctioning the practice were inserted in the later sacred books Farquhar quotes one

If a woman's husband dies, let her lead a life of chastity, or else mount his pyre

Vishnu-smṛiti \ \ 14.

Since the head of the family was a man and every clan and family wanted men to protect it from its enemies, there was a tendency to set less value on women The general opinion of the female sex seems to have been that put into the mouth of Indra 'Indra himself hath said, The mind of woman brooks not discipline Her intellect hath little weight' (*Rig-veda* \ iii 33 17), and 'the hearts of women

are those of hyenas' (\ 95 15) From a very early date prostitution was an institution

That women were not debarred from hearing the Vedas is clear, for the authors of some of the hymns of the Aryan tribes were women Apālā composed a hymn that is now the eightieth in the eighth book of the Rig-veda, and Ghoshā, a leper maiden, was author of two, the thirty ninth and the fortieth in the tenth book

Beyond saying that the king, *rājā*, was a ruler it is not possible to define his exact rank and authority

The king Probably it entirely depended on the individual He was the chief of a group

of families Sometimes he was chosen Sometimes his rank was hereditary In time of peace he was 'judge and protector' of his people, who brought to him voluntary gifts In time of war he was the leader of the warriors, and before a battle he would offer sacrifice for his tribe, or cause a priestly singer to offer it This was the beginning of that difference of office which lay at the root of the later distinction of the warrior and priest castes among the Aryans

Morality was a family and tribal matter Truth, right conduct, kindness, loyalty to one's neighbour and comrade, bravery, and—later—careful observance of religious rites and liberality to priests were counted high virtues Fraud, malignant speech, lying and treachery were roundly condemned Violence to defenceless maidens and the adultery of a wife were regarded as grave crimes

Such crimes as one would expect to find among tribal peoples entering on a new civilization are mentioned in the hymns Raiders carry off cattle Robbers are found

on highways. A thief steals an honest man's clothes. There are sorcerers who utter harmful spells, and seducers of women.

For protection from his enemies the Aryan trusted the gods and his own right arm. For crimes in the community there were judgements, ordeals and punishments, and the vengeance of the gods.

Gambling was a terrible curse to the Aryan. The hymns say that the father's punishment of the dissolute son is of no effect, the player is unmoved by the destruction of his home, he remains indifferent though his wife becomes the property of others, he rises early and indulges in the passion of play till evening, defeat in play is equivalent to starvation and thirst.

Gambling

In one of the hymns¹ a gambler vividly describes his own experience

1 The tumbling, air-born (products) of the great Vibhūdaka tree (i.e. the dice) delight me as they continue to roll on the dice board. The exciting dice seem to me like a draught of the soma plant growing on mount Pūjavat.

7 Hooking, piercing, deceitful, vexatious, delighting to torment, the dice dispense transient gifts, and again run the winner, they appear to the gambler covered with honey.

13 Never play with dice, practice husbandry, rejoice in thy property, esteeming it sufficient. At a sacrifice, the Kshatriya in particular used to play at dice with his wife, or wives, and sons.

¹ Rig-veda, 34, quoted in the section *Readings from the Vedas*

Dancers or actors afforded entertainment to the Aryans. Ushas is said to display herself like a dancer who decks herself with ornaments. Allusion is made to the living going forth to dance and laugh after a funeral. Drums are mentioned, and a hymn in the Atharva-veda is addressed to that musical instrument.

The Aryans delighted in chariot races. The sixty-ninth hymn in the eighth book of the Rig-veda is a prayer to Indra, called Śatakratu the god of a hundred rites, for success in a coming chariot race. It reads as follows in Griffith's translation —

- 1 O Śatakratu, truly I have made none else my comforter
Indra, be gracious unto us
- 2 Though who hast ever aided us kindly of old to win the spoil,
As such, O Indra, favour us
- 3 What now ! As prompter of the poor thou helpst him who sheds the juice
Wilt thou not, Indra, strengthen us ?
- 4 O Indra, help our chariot on, yea, thunderer, though it lag behind
Give this my car the foremost place
- 5 Ho there ! why sittest thou at ease ? Make thou my chariot to be first
And bring the fame of victory near
- 6 Assist our car that seeks the prize What can be easier for thee ?
So make thou us victorious

These chariot races were a training for war. And the tribes of the Arvans were constantly at war, sometimes among themselves and sometimes with the Dasvus, the races in India before the Arvans entered it. These Arvan expeditions were often raids for cattle or reprisals on tribes that had attacked the Arvan villages. Indeed the term *gosuyudh* 'fighting among or for cows' is used in the Veda as a name for a warrior in general (1 112, 122) and a common word for battle is *garvisti*, literally 'striving for cows'.

War

The bands of the Aryans marched under their leaders, who had banners. They would sing or shout the prowess of their ancestors, and boast of the aid which Indra or Brihaspati granted them. Conches were blown as horns. Sometimes the leader drove in a war-chariot covered with cowhides, some warriors used bows and arrows, others had darts. The bands often slew all in the villages they conquered. Sometimes they were content to carry off the plunder. When an invader attacked an Aryan settlement, ramparts were thrown up, trees were made into barricades, and the gods were called to aid. The 'Weapon-song' is a hymn that echoes with the clamour of the strife.¹

From the Vedas it is clear that like their civilization, the science of the Arvans was of a rude and elementary character. The earliest Aryans only knew a few stars or constellations, and there is no certain evidence that the planets were known to the singers of the Rig-vedic age. Aryan ideas of the origin of the universe are utterly

The childhood of
the Aryan race

¹ *Rig-veda* 6 75 quoted below in the *Readings*

inadequate and primitive, and though Aryan medical science distinguished several diseases, its remedies were charms and amulets and herbs used in conjunction with incantations. The world was very wonderful to the Aryans as they lived and fought in the Land of the Five Rivers. But theirs was a very limited life, unsophisticated in its aims, direct and frank in its activities, lived in the open air, full of health from sun and wind and rains. As Max Müller says

In the hymns of the Veda we see man left to himself to solve the riddle of this world. We see him crawling on like a creature of the earth with all the desires and weakness of his animal nature. Food, wealth and power, a large family and a long life, are the theme of his daily prayers. But he begins to lift up his eyes. He stares at the tent of heaven, and asks who supports it? He opens his eyes to the winds, and asks them whence and whither? He is awakened from darkness and slumber by the light of the sun, and him whom his eyes cannot behold, and who seems to grant him the daily pittance of his existence, he calls 'his life, his breath, his brilliant Lord and Protector' ¹

And it is only as this is remembered that it is possible to appreciate the hopes and fears, the prayers and aspirations, the courage and the patience of the bards who sang, in those far away centuries, the very heart's thoughts of the men whose pilgrimage into India was to have such a mighty effect on the history and the thought of the world.

They were the direct ancestors of many of the tribes
 Their hymns comprised in the great Brahman caste
 of modern India. Their speech was the

¹ MAX MÜLLER, *Chips* vol. 1 2nd ed., p. 69

mother language of many of the languages spoken in India to day, and from it all have borrowed the terms of philosophy, worship and faith Their religion was the beginning of religions that have stirred the hearts of millions To know how they prayed and built their earliest altar-fires and offered sacrifice with song is to know how the forefathers of Hindu and Greek and Briton sought divine grace and divine protection One of the most precious heir-looms of the ages for all thinking men are the hymns which were first sung by the poets among those primitive warriors and herdsmen. For those hymns have come down to us, and however much they may have been changed between the moment that the inspired bard chanted them to his tribesmen and the time when they were written down to abide for ever, they bring those far away days back to us Through them the hopes and fears of the singer and his hearers ring in our ears In them we come face to face with the joys and sorrows, the war and peace, the funerals and festivals of forty centuries ago

II THE VEDAS OF THE ARYANS

PRECISELY how and when the hymns of the Aryans were first composed we shall never know. Much in them is and always will be obscure. What scrupulous scribe first toilsomely wrote them out is not recorded. But thereafter, though the language of those hymns became less and less familiar the psalm-books into which they were gathered were practically never altered and the student to day has little doubt that the text before him is almost syllable for syllable, as it was three thousand years ago, often as it was when it was composed and sung at some sacrifice in the years before the Aryans had done more than make raids into the land of the Five Rivers.

The existence of a sacred literature in Sanskrit was known to some of the first Roman Catholic missionaries in India, and men like Robert de Nobili who arrived in Madura in 1606 and Constantine Beschi a century later acquired sufficient knowledge of it to compose and argue in it.

**How the West
learned of
the hymns**

But the translation of the *Bhagavad Gītā*, by Charles Wilkins, published in 1785, and of *Śakuntala*, by Sir Williams Jones, published in 1789, were the real commencement of the scientific study of the Sanskrit language, and the publication and translation of the most important works in that language. Yet for a long time it was

difficult to obtain accurate knowledge of the Vedas. Very few manuscript copies were in existence, and while the pandits were willing to communicate the manuscripts of the later and less sacred Sanskrit works of law, philosophy and drama to Englishmen resident in India, they were not willing to show them the manuscripts of the more ancient and infinitely more holy Vedas. In some cases where the manuscripts of the Vedas had come into western hands, the pandits would not translate them. Colebrooke (1765—1837) alone seemed able to overcome these prejudices and his essays *On the Vedas, or the Sacred Writings of the Hindus* though published in 1805 are of permanent value.

Nearly a quarter of a century later a young German scholar named Friedrich Rosen began to work at an edition of the Sanskrit text of the Rig-veda for publication. Max Müller relates an incident which shows the opinion of the intrinsic value of the hymns of the Vedas held by a highly-educated Hindu thinker, and probably by not a few others, at that time. The Raja Rammohun Roy was in London and saw Friedrich Rosen at the British Museum busily engaged in copying manuscripts of the Rig-veda. The Raja was surprised, and told Rosen that he ought not to waste his time on the hymns, but that he should study the Upanishads.¹ Rosen published a specimen of the hymns of the Rig-veda in 1830, but he died before he had nearly completed his task. Only the first book of the Rig-veda, with a Latin

**The publication
of the Vedas**

¹ MAX MÜLLER, *Biographical Essays*, p. 39

translation, was finished by him and published after his death in 1838

- In 1845 Max Müller was at work in Paris, copying from manuscripts the text of the Rīg-veda together with the commentary of Sāyana Āchārya. Sāyana died in 1387 at Vijayanagara, the capital of the famous Hindu kingdom founded about 1340 which is now a long stretch of ruins known as Hampi in the Bellary district of the Madras Presidency. He was teacher and minister of one of the kings of that dynasty, and was younger brother of Mādhava Āchārya, the author of the compendium of philosophical systems called the *Sarva-darsana-samgraha*¹. Sāyana's commentary no doubt embodied the opinion of the most learned pandits of the time, and though composed perhaps almost three thousand years later than the hymns contains exceedingly valuable traditional interpretations. The East India Company authorized Max Müller to bring out an edition of the hymns with this commentary at its expense. The first volume appeared in 1849. The publication of the edition was completed within about twenty years. The price of the six volumes was £15. The second edition, in four volumes, was brought out at the expense of the then Maharajah of Vizianagaram, and sold at £8. This is regarded as the standard edition both of the text of the Rīg-veda and of Sāyana's commentary.

The text of the Rīg-veda was published in roman letters at Berlin in 1861.

The text of the Sāma-veda, with a German translation, was published by Benfey in 1848.

¹ MACDONELL *Sanskrit Literature* pp 59 275 406

Various texts of the different recensions of the Yajur-veda have been edited by A Weber, and L von Schroeder

The text of the Atharva-veda was published by Roth and Whitney in 1856 and another recension from a single ancient birch-bark manuscript discovered by Professor Bühler in Kashmir is being prepared by Dr. Maurice Bloomfield

An English translation of the Rig-veda, based on the interpretations contained in the commentary of Sāyana was commenced in 1850 by Professor H H Wilson, the first professor of Sanskrit at Oxford Part of it was published after his death Professor E B Cowell in his preface to the fifth volume says that 'this work does not pretend to give a complete translation of the Rig-veda, but only a faithful image of that particular phase of its interpretation which the mediaeval Hindus, as represented by Sāyana have preserved'

Translations
into English

A translation of many of the hymns of the Rig-veda entitled *The Sacred Hymns of the Brahmans* was prepared by Max Müller, and published in Trübner's Oriental Series, in two volumes

A translation of many of the hymns entitled *Vedic Hymns*, by Max Müller and Oldenberg appears in the series of translations known as *The Sacred Books of the East*, published by the University of Oxford

Perhaps the most helpful of all manuals of Vedic teaching are the five volumes of *Original Sanskrit Texts*, by Dr John Muir (Trübner & Co) They contain classified collections of Vedic and later texts with accurate translations and a vast collection of notes and

comments Dr Muir's method enables the student to see for himself the evolution Sanskrit teaching from the earlier ideas, the origin of myths, the development of customs, and the influence of later environment It is a notable treasure house of exact scholarship

Mr R T H Griffith, formerly Principal of the Sanskrit College, Benares, made complete translations of all four Vedas, Mr Griffith had the great advantage of long residence in Benares, and some of the most learned pandits in India were his fellow-workers The notes that accompany his translations are of high value For the English student this is the most useful rendering, and its completeness makes it more serviceable than any other ¹

By reprints of the Sanskrit text, by accurate translations, and by many comments and discussions among scholars in Europe and America and India during the last sixty or seventy years it has rapidly become possible to appreciate the precise value and significance of these ancient hymns, to understand the general circumstances in which they were composed, and the motives that inspired their authors, and thus to become acquainted with Aryan singers and priests at the beginning of Indian civilization

¹ The following are the editions of Mr Griffith's translations —

The Hymns of the Rig veda Second edition Two volumes
Price fourteen rupees

The Hymns of the Sama-veda One volume Price four rupees

The Hymns of the White Yajur veda One volume Price three rupees twelve annas

The Hymns of the Atharva veda Two volumes Price twelve rupees All these translations are published by Messrs E I Lazarus & Co, Benares

The sacred books of the Hindus include a wide range of religious literature composed in the Sanskrit language. They are divided into two classes, called *Śruti* and *Smṛiti*. The term *Smṛiti* means 'memory', 'recollection', 'tradition', and the books denoted by *Smṛiti* are the accounts of the gods and goddesses composed in comparatively modern times, known as the eighteen *Purāṇas* and the *Upa purāṇas*, the collections of aphorisms dealing with household matters and social and legal usage, such as the *Smṛta* or *Grihya Sūtras*, the *Dharma Sūtras*, and the Law Book of Manu, the six *Vedāṅgas*, dealing with phonetics, grammar, etymology, religious practice and astrology, and the great epic poems, the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata*. The term *Śruti* or 'hearing' is that used to indicate what was directly heard by or was revealed to the holy sages of old¹. *Śruti* is thought of as existing from eternity, made known to the sages in time, and transmitted by them to their disciples, but not composed or arranged by them.

**Śruti and
Smṛiti**

The works indicated by the term *Śruti* are the four Vedas, or *Samhitās* or collections of hymns or *mantras*, and the Brāhmanas of the Vedas, with their Aranyakas for hermits and their Upanishads².

The term *Veda* is from the Sanskrit root *vid*, 'to know', a root which also appears in the Latin *videre*, 'to see', and the English 'wit'. *Veda* primarily signifies 'knowledge', it

The Veda

¹ MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 34

² Ibid., p. 205

designates 'sacred lore' as a branch of literature, and is also applied to the book containing the sacred lore¹. It is thus used in a general sense to denote the whole body of the most ancient Sanskrit literature, but it particularly refers to the four great collections of hymns that contain the divine wisdom named the Rīg-veda, the Yajur-veda, the Sama-veda and the Atharva-veda.

These names of the four Vedas are derived from terms which refer to the different styles of composition found in them. These four names, according to Dr Maurice Bloomfield, belong to a somewhat later Vedic time, they do not coincide exactly with the earlier names, nor do they fully correspond to the contents of the collections themselves as they now stand. The earlier terms referred to the different styles of composition, They were

Names of the Vedas	<i>ṛcāḥ</i> , stanzas of praise,
	<i>yajūṣī</i> , liturgical stanzas and formulas,
	<i>sāmāni</i> , melodies,
	and <i>atharvāṅgīrasaḥ</i> , blessings and curses.

But the collection which now goes by the name of Rīg-veda contains—in its later parts—'blessings and curses', as well as 'stanzas of praise', together with most of the stanzas which form the text to the *sāman*-melodies of the Sāma-veda. Similarly the Atharva-veda contains *ṛcāḥ*, 'stanzas of praise', and *yajūṣī*, 'liturgical stanzas' mostly worked over for its own purposes, as well as its characteristic 'blessings and curses'. The Yajur-veda also contains matter of the other Vedic types in addition to liturgical formulae.

¹ MACDONELL *Sanskrit Literature* p 29

The Sāma-veda is merely a collection of certain *ricāh*, or 'stanzas of praise', taken with variations and additions from the Rīg-veda, and set to tunes indicated by musical notations¹

Careful examination shows that these four collections of hymns fall into two groups. In the former are the Rīg-veda, the Sāma-veda and the Yajur-veda. In the other the Atharva-veda stands alone. This distinction is based on differences in contents, character and date.

The relation of the Rīg, Sama and Yajur-vedas is not very complex. The Sama and Yajur-vedas were not independent of the Rīg-veda, and both were of later date. The origin of the three may be outlined somewhat as follows.

The relation
of the
four Vedas

In the earliest times any one might perform sacrifice. Then a priestly class arose distinct from the ordinary people, and it may be supposed that it was during this period that the hymns of the Rīg-veda were collected. Speedily, however, as sacrifice and ceremonial was elaborated different orders came into existence among the priests. The highest order was that of the Hotṛis who recited hymns in praise of the god to whom the sacrifice was being offered while the ceremony was being performed. They recited hymns from the Rīg-veda but no special collection of hymns, no *saṁhitā*, was ever made for them. For two other classes of priests such collections, or psalm books were made. It was the duty of the Udgātṛi priests to chant according to certain traditional rules during the sacrifice of Soma, and for this

¹ *Religion of the Veda* p. 26

purpose a number of hymns were collected from the Rīg veda, especially from the Eighth and Ninth Books. These hymns form the Sāma-veda, and of the 1549 verses in it only seventy eight are not found in the Rīg veda.

Another collection of hymns was incorporated in a sacrificial service book along with a number of prose directions for performing the sacrifice. It was the manual of the Adhvaryus and contained the verses to be muttered by them and their assistants who prepared the space of ground and the altar, offered the sacrificial victims and poured out the libations. This was the Yajur veda. Two distinct forms of this Veda have come down to us. In the oldest, the instructions about ritual are mingled with the original verses from the Rīg veda. The chief recension of this is that taught by a school of teachers called the Taittirīyans. At a later date other scholars called the Vājasaneyins separated the dogmatic or explanatory matter from the verses to be recited and the name of 'clear' or 'White' (*Śukla*) *Yajur veda*, was applied to their recension, the other being called the *Black* (*Kṛishna*) *Yajur veda*.

The prose passages of the Yajur veda are, of course, new matter. The verse portion is chiefly taken from the Rīg veda, but there are some new verses in cases where it was not possible to extract from the Rīg veda verses suitable to the complex ritual that had been elaborated by the later priesthood of the debased form of the Aryan faith current before the rise of the philosophic schools and Buddhism and Jainism.

It is difficult to ascertain clearly the date of the

Yajur-veda It makes use of the Rig veda, but the verses quoted are taken out of their connexion and adapted to different purposes.

The Yajur-veda

There are many new verses about the ritual of the sacrifices. Its characteristic element are the prose formulae, the *yajus*, which are in prose, and this is the oldest prose literature of the Indo-European peoples. These are sometimes brief prayers or sacrificial phrases and sometimes they are long sentences, full of repetitions, concerning the sacrificial victims or the ceremony. Dr Bloomfield quotes one that is typical

May life prosper through the sacrifice
 May life's breath prosper through the sacrifice
 May the eye prosper through the sacrifice
 May the ear prosper through the sacrifice
 May the back prosper through the sacrifice
 May the sacrifice prosper through the sacrifice

Many thousand formulae of this kind are collected in the great concordance of the Vedis prepared by Dr Bloomfield. Apart from their lack of meaning, they show says he 'a formalism and mental decay upon the very brink of dissolution'. And both it and the Brāhmanas belong to a period in the history of religion in India when ceremonial and sacrifice had almost destroyed the simpler religious ideas of the early Aryans.

syllables, such as *om*, *hai* at certain points or at the end of the stanzas, perhaps something like the shouts that accompany religious processions in India to day. The Sāma veda was not held in the same repute as the Rig-veda and Yajur veda and the recitation of either of them had to cease when the shout of *sāmans* was heard. Except that it represents the use of chanting in later Aryan worship the Sāma-veda adds very little to the information that is to be obtained about the religious practices of the Aryans. And like the Yajur-veda it belongs to the time when priestly formalism dominated the worship of the Aryans.

The last book, Book XX, of the Atharva-veda, is almost entirely made up of hymns taken bodily from the Rig veda and of hymns compiled from verses of the Rig veda. Evidently this section has been added to connect the Atharva-veda with the Rig veda and so to give it more authority, for as a whole the Atharva veda is plainly of quite a different origin to the rest of the Vedas. It is really a collection of spells, and it may represent the popular beliefs of the common people among the Aryans in some passages, especially as those beliefs were modified by the influence of the demon worship of the aborigines whom the Aryans conquered. It also contains ideas about the gods belonging to a later period than that of the Rig veda. While the Rig veda is the psalm-book of the worship of the Bright Gods, the most salient teaching of the Atharva veda is sorcery of various sorts. Some spells are benevolent, such as those for health and prosperity, for safety from demons, for establishing harmony in village and family life, and for the

reconciliation of enemies, but there is much that is born of fear and horror

Madame Ragozin justly says

We have here, as though in opposition to the bright, cheerful pantheon of beneficent deities, so trustingly and gratefully addressed by the Rishis of the Rig, a weird repulsive world of darkly scowling demons, inspiring abject fear, such as never sprang from Aryan fancy. We find ourselves in the midst of a goblin worship, the exact counterpart of that with which we became familiar in Turanian Chaldea. Every evil thing in nature, from a drought to a fever or bad qualities of the human heart, is personified and made the object of terror-stricken propitiation, or of attempts at circumvention through witchcraft, or the instrument of harm to others through the same compelling force. Here and there, worship takes the form of conjuring, not prayer, its ministers are sorcerers, not priest¹

The traditional Hindu view is that the Atharva-veda is inferior to the other Vedas and modern scholarship is convinced that it is not of the same antiquity as the Rig-veda

Griffith, who has translated it, gives his own opinion and those of other eminent scholars on this point as follows

I have called the Atharva-veda a comparatively late addition to the three ancient Vedas, of which, it may be observed, one only, the Rig-veda, is original and historical, the other two being merely liturgical compilations. The Atharva is like the Rik, in the main historical and original, but its contents cannot, as a whole, lay claim to equal antiquity

¹ *Vedic India*, p. 117.

He also quotes Professor Whitney, one of the most learned of Sanskrit scholars, who writes

The greater portion of the hymns are plainly shown, both by their language and internal character, to be of much later date than the general contents of the other historic Veda, and even than its tenth book with which the *śānta* nearly connected in import and origin. . . . This, however, would not imply that the main body of the *Ātharva* hymns were not already in existence when the compilation of the *Rig* took place. Their character would be ground enough for their rejection and exclusion from the canon until other hands were found to undertake their separate gathering into an independent collection.¹

Professor Weber concludes that the origin of the *Ātharva Samhitā* dates from the period when Brahmanism had become dominant. In it he finds the worshipper oppressed by anxious dread of the evil spirits of nature and of the magic powers, seeking refuge in ceremonialism. He suggests that, while the *Rig-veda* contains the songs of the higher Aryan families, the parts of the *Ātharva-veda* that are peculiar to it may belong to the lower ranks, that is to the common people, most likely to be affected by the demon worship of the *Dasyus*.

The oldest name of the *Ātharva-veda* is *atharvāṅgirasā*, a compound word made up of the names of two families of priests, the *ātharvans* and the *Angirases*.² The former name was thought to indicate 'holy charms', or 'blessings' and the latter 'witchcraft charms' or 'curses'. Thus it is the book of 'blessings and curses'. It is sometimes called the *Bhṛigvāṅgirasah*, a name in

GRIFFITH *Ātharva-veda* Preface i
² BLOOMFIELD, *Religion of the Veda*, p. 39

which the word *Bhrigus* takes the place of the term *Atharva* with the same meaning of 'blessings'

It is also called the *Brahma-veda*, the Veda of the *Brāhman*, that is the Veda of the supervising priest who watched the performance of the Vedic (*Śrauta*) sacrifices. But this name may also be due to the fact that there are included in this Veda hymns which deal with 'Brahman', the monistic supreme principle of later Hindu thought

The *Taittīyā Samhitā* of the Black Yajur-veda mentions the Rīg, Sāma and Yajur-vedas alone in several passages (e g ii 4, 12, 7, iii 3, 1, 4)

The *Śatapatha-brāhmaṇa* uses the term *trayi-vidyā* for the Rīg, Sāma and Yajur-vedas. The *dharma* literature

**The Three
Vedas and the
Atharva-veda**

also agrees that the Atharvan, while useful and even indispensable under certain circumstances, is on the whole inferior in character and position

There is, therefore, full justification for considering the Atharva-veda as distinct from the other three and recording a later phase of the Aryans' religion.

It will thus lie outside the scope of this volume to deal with it. At the

**Pre-eminence of
the Rīg veda**

same time it may be noted that in a brief, rapid and general survey of Vedic teaching, such as this, there will be little need to give detailed attention to the Sāma and Yajur-vedas. It is the Rīg-veda which gives the most valuable materials to the student of the Aryan religion. The Sāma-veda and the Yajur-veda both reflect the time when ceremonialism was corrupting earlier and simpler beliefs. Valuable as they and the Atharva-veda are for a history of the deterioration of the

primitive faith as it came in closer relation to the demon worship of the aboriginal peoples of India, they do not give much help to the understanding of the earlier religion. For that appeal must always be made to the Rīg-veda, and consequently reference will here be made almost exclusively to the Rīg-veda.

Each of the four Vedas is divided into two parts, the Mantras and the Brāhmanas.

Mantra means 'instrument of thought', speech, a sacred text or saying, a prayer or song of praise, a Vedic hymn in particular, or a sacrificial formula. In modern vernaculars the word is now used to denote a magic spell or incantation and, this meaning is derived from the older idea that the Vedic hymn sung or recited would secure the favour of the gods or avert ill fortune from them or from human enemies.

The hymns are also called *Sūktas* a term derived from *su ukta* 'that which is well or properly recited'. This term is used of a Vedic hymn as a whole as distinguished from a *rich* or single verse.¹

Each entire collection of Mantras forms a *Samhitā*. The *Samhitā*, in the case of the Rīg-veda, and of the

The Samhitās *Sāma* and *Yajur* vedas so far as they are borrowed from it, consist of the songs of the early Aryan sages as they have been handed down by tradition. In the Rīg-veda they are nearest in form to the spontaneous utterances of the bards who first sung them. In the *Sāma* and the *Yajur* vedas the poetry of the ancient psalmists is moulded by the usage of a later ritual, and does not vibrate with the ancient

¹ MONIER WILLIAMS *Sanskrit-English Lexicon*, 786, 1015, 1240

fervour The Mantras in the Samhitā of the Atharva-veda are of a different order Incantations, spells, magical formulae form its Samhitā, and, as applied to its contents, the term *mantra* has precisely the meaning which it generally has when used in the South Indian vernaculars

The second part of each Veda, the Brāhmana, was drawn up for ceremonial instruction of the Brahmans. They are really directories for the priests **The Brahmanas** who used the Vedas in worship They contain regulations regarding the employment of the mantras, and the celebration of the various rites of sacrifice, and also include treatises called *Āṅanyakas*, and others called *Upanishads* or *Vedāntas* (so called from their being the concluding portions of each Veda), which expound the mystical sense of some of the ceremonies, and discuss the nature of the godhead, and final liberation ¹

The Brāhmanas as they now exist are of much later date than the hymns of the Vedas, and give a picture of the religion of the Aryans that belongs to the time when priest craft had elaborated religious ceremonial to an almost impossible degree On this account any clear picture of the religion of the early Aryans is not to be expected in the Brāhmanas But while the Brāhmanas in their present form belong unmistakably to a later age than the collections of hymns to which they are appended, there is in them much of very great antiquity. Dr K S Macdonald summarises their value well in his *Brahmanas of the Vedas*

¹ MUIR'S *Sanskrit Texts*, vol 1, p 2 (Second edition)

In the Brāhmanas there is much that is older than any of the mantras, things, such as myths, legends, stories, to which the mantras clearly allude. In the mantras the ancient Rishis do not tell the stories they refer to, because to them they are things well known requiring no telling—as, for example, the story of Sunahśepha, the various accounts of the creation, etc. The Rishis knew these and took for granted that their audiences knew them, so they merely allude to them in their songs or hymns. Thus, some of the contents of the Brāhmanas, constituting folk-lore and mythical and legendary stories, some others of the sacrifices, as also their ideas of the gods, may be and most likely are older than any of the hymns which have come down to us. But this much is certain, that the Brāhmanas are the oldest *prose*, compositions now extant, of the Arvan family.¹

The Āranyakas and Upanishads are the supreme contribution of Brahmanism to the thought of the world.

Professedly the Āranyakas, or ‘forest
Aranyakas
and Upanishads teachings’, were designed to prepare the pupil for the life of a devotee secluded from the distractions of worldly existence in some forest. The term *upanishad* seems to denote ‘secret instruction’, only given to a fully-qualified pupil by his teacher, to introduce him to the highest modes of philosophic thought, leading up to that supreme knowledge which insures liberation from human existence.

Although by conventional opinion the Upanishads are part of the Veda, the end of the Veda, or Vedānta, they belong to a date much later than the hymns of the Rig veda, and represent philosophic and religious conceptions different from those of the Aryans. Even

¹ H. S. MACDONALD *Brahmanas of the Vedas*, p. 7

the earliest, the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka*, *Chhāndogya*, *Taittirīya*, *Aitareya*, *Kaushītaki* and *Kena* Upanishads, though always held to belong to *Śruti* or Revelation are outside the scope of an inquiry into the religion of the early Aryans. The composition of hymns must have ceased at an early date, and though some hymns not included in the *Rig-veda* gained acceptance among the priests and appeared in the later *Samhitās*, they are comparatively few. On the other hand apparently no hesitation was felt about the extension of the *Brāhmanas*, and though some, perhaps many of them have been lost, they form a large literature by themselves. They are sometimes spoken of as sixty or seventy in number and the Upanishads connected with them are said to be as many.

The *Brāhmanas* being in prose, they were, therefore not so readily learned by rote as if they had been in verse. It will be obvious, then, that, as they increased in number, and as the number of subjects taught by the sages were multiplied, their disciples had to find a method that would insure the faithful memory of essential rules and doctrines. Hence series of aphorisms, strings of aphorisms, or *Sūtras* were formulated, reduced to the utmost brevity, indeed so condensed that they are all but unintelligible.

The Sūtras

They are not considered parts of the direct divine revelation (*śruti*). Tradition (*smṛiti*) begins with them. These aids to memory are not literature in any true sense. They are simply outline manuals for keeping alive in the pupil's memory the details of the subjects that they deal with, the subjects of a Hindu Sanskrit student's education. They were usually summed up

under six heads, called the *Vedāṅgas*, or 'members of the body' of the Veda. Of the six, *kalpa*, ceremonial, is the most important, including three groups of *Sūtras* the *Śrauta Sūtras*, which deal with sacrifices, summarizing the teaching of the *Brāhmanas*, the *Gṛhya* or *Smārta Sūtras*, which deal with the ceremonies connected with family life, and the *Dharma Sūtras*, which provide rules of conduct for the various classes of men and the various stages of their life ¹

It may be noted that as the Brahmanical schools grew in number each drew up its own series of *Sūtras*, and that the *Sūtras* of the Sanskrit grammarian Pāṇini, who lived about three hundred years before the Christian era are included in the traditional literature of Brahmanic Hinduism. From their date and character it is clear that these *Sūtras* cannot help to the understanding of the early Aryan faith.

Till a short time ago, perhaps even at the present day, the popular belief among Hindus as to the origin of the Vedas was that they were eternally existent in the mind of the Supreme, and made manifest by him in each *kalpa*.

The *kalpas* here referred to are the periods into which, according to Hindu reckoning, the time is divided. Such a *kalpa* is a 'day of *Brahmā*,' and a 'day of *Brahmā*' consists of a thousand *yugas* or ages, amounting altogether to four hundred and thirty-two million years of mortals ²

At the beginning of each *kalpa* all the existing universe is created and the Vedas are supposed then to be revealed.

¹ FARQUHAR *Primer of Hinduism*, p. 59

² MONIER WILLIAMS *Sanskrit-English Dictionary* p. 213 a

ed by Brahmā through the rishis. At the close of the *kalpa* all the existing universe is destroyed and then there is a new creation and a new revelation in the new *kalpa*.

The sacred books of Hinduism contain many variations of this popular belief, and some theories of the origin of the Vedas that are quite different.

Some of these are matter of fact, as when the poets speak of themselves

**Traditions in the
Sacred Books**

as having made and framed their hymns as a village joiner makes a cart. Some of them belong to the vast collection of stories concerning the gods, which makes them the authors of the sacred books in the same way that they were the creators of the world. Some are plainly symbolic, such as that which calls Vāch, the goddess of speech, the mother of the Vedas or says that they sprang from the 'leavings of sacrifice'. The sages themselves distinguish between new hymns and old, but, as it is not possible to discern positively which of the Vedic hymns are the oldest, it is not possible to arrange the various assertions that they contain in any historical order, or even to trace with any confidence, the relation of the various legends, and the only conclusion to which impartial investigation leads is that among all these various, and often inconsistent statements there is no one account of the origin of the hymns that was generally received when or soon after the hymns were composed.¹

And yet, though there is not sufficient evidence to show the exact occasion of any single hymn in the whole collection, there are many hints and allusions in the hymns, and when noted they give at least some general

¹ A somewhat detailed account of these traditions will be found in Appendix I.

idea of the way in which the various collections came into existence is reached. What happened seems to have been as follows

All nations in the earlier stage of their civilization regard the utterances of the man who has the gift of poetic song with awe, considering such songs to be the expression of the will of the beings of the mysterious spirit world, or a means to affect their will

When the bard's songs took the form of prayers and entreaties for the favour of the god on the tribe in hunting or war, or for rain in time of drought, or for children to increase the strength of the tribe before its enemies, or for health in time of pestilence and there was what seemed to be an answer to the petition, the fame of the poet grew great and the wonderful words that had secured blessing were treasured as a spell, or *mantra*, and so it came about that victory in battle was often ascribed to the virtue of some hymn. Thus it is said in the Rīg veda, vii 33 3, 'So did Indra preserve Sudās in the battle of the ten kings through your prayers, O Vasiṣṭhas'

Sometimes such hymns were remembered and chanted on other occasions by the singer himself. Sometimes it was a follower or servant or pupil or disciple who learned them by rote. Many of these spells were lost after a generation or two. But those that were identified with some special occasion, especially those that had been first uttered at some recurring sacrifice were repeated when the sacrifice was again performed. The Arvans from the most ancient times had offered such sacrifices, though they had no temples and no images, and hymns were always recited at them

And so hymns which had first been uttered on the occasion of some great need became part of the regular ritual, of sacrifice, as charms that had already proved powerful and might again secure divine response. The more notable of them were thus handed down by the descendants of the original bard, and preserved in the families that grew to be the great priestly families of later ages when there were separate orders of priests. Reference to the hymns of the R̥g-veda will show traces of this. While the first book of the R̥g-veda is called the book of the Śātarchins, that is the book of the 'hundred authors', some of the other books are each largely ascribed to a single seer (*ṛishi*). For example almost every hymn in the second book is ascribed to the *ṛishi* Gṛtsamada, most of the hymns in the third book are said to have been composed by the *ṛishi* Viśvāmītra, forty out of the fifty-eight hymns in the fourth book are ascribed to the *ṛishi* Vāmadeva, son of Gotama, most of the hymns in the sixth book are the work of Bharadvāja, and all the hymns of the seventh book are ascribed to the *ṛishi* Vasistha. The names of these *ṛishis* may be taken as the names of ancestors of the priestly families that arose as the Aryans settled in the country known as Kurukshetra, in the plain between the rivers Sutlej and Jumna.

These hymns were then gradually gathered into one great collection by some college of priests, to guard it from change and destruction as religious ceremonial became more elaborate and the priests became more and more scrupulous to use the exact words of the ancients, which were even in those early days probably ceasing to be entirely intelligible to the ordinary folk.

and therefore liable to alteration Thus the Rig-veda was compiled

There was more than one edition of this great collection, but the one that has come down to us is that of the Sākālas

Probably at first none of these editions was written Dr Buhler argues that writing may have been introduced into India by Phœnician traders coming by way of Mesopotamia into India about 800 B C, but references to writing in ancient India are late and rare, in no case earlier than the fourth century before Christ, and perhaps not very long before the date of the Asokan inscriptions (257 to 231 B C) Discussing this Max Müller says that there is not one single allusion in the hymns of the Rig-veda to anything connected with writing

The transmission of the Veda

Pure Brahmans never speak of their *granthas* or books They speak of their *Veda*, which means 'knowledge' They speak of their *Śruti*, which means 'what they have heard with their ears' They speak of *Smṛiti*, which means 'what their fathers have declared unto them' We meet with *Brāhmanas*, i.e. the sayings of Brahmans with *Sūtras*, i.e. the strings of rules, with *Vedāṅgas*, i.e. the members of the Veda, with *Pravachanas*, i.e. preachings, with *Sāstras*, i.e. teachings, with *Darsanas*, i.e. demonstrations, but we never meet with a book, or a volume, or a page!

As Professor Macdonell points out sacred learning in India was for very many centuries, indeed until modern times, quite independent of writing And Dr Bloomfield

holds that Vedic tradition is in this respect the most remarkable in recorded history. There is not one inscription, building, monument, coin, jewel, or utensil from Vedic times. The manuscripts of the Vedas that exist are of comparatively recent date for the early manuscripts perished centuries ago in the furious Indian climate, and of those now existing only a few date back to the fourteenth century of our era and only a very few go back to the twelfth. Yet here is 'one of the curiosities of Hindu religious life'. The adherents of each Veda or Vedic school, no matter whether the text of that school was reduced to writing or not, in theory ought to, and in fact many do, actually know their texts by heart. These are the so-called *Śrōtrīyas* or 'Oral Traditionists'. They live to this day, being, as it were, living manuscripts of their respective Vedas. 'The eminent Hindu scholar, the late Shankar Pandurang Pandit, tells us in the preface to his great Bombay edition of the Atharva-veda how he used three of these oral reciters of the Atharva-veda out of a total of only four that were at that time still alive in the Dekkhan, and how their oral authority proved to be quite as weighty as the written authority of his manuscripts. These living manuscripts were respectively, Messrs Bapuji Jivanram, Kesava Bhat bin Daji Bhat, and Venkan Bhatji, the last the most celebrated Atharva Vaidika in the Dekkhan'.¹

It is in this way that sacred learning in India, through all the centuries till modern times, has been independent of writing. Hymns, rules, speculations have always been learned from the lips of a spiritual teacher (*guru*) not from a manuscript.

¹ BLOOMFIELD, *Religion of the Veda* pp 21-2

The later sacred books, especially the Upanishads give glimpses of how this learning was imparted, and it is easy to picture what took place. Max Muller's description is true of disciples in the sacred colleges to day, as it was of their predecessors in the forest hermitages three thousand years ago.

**How the disciple
learned**

How then was the Veda learnt? It was learnt by every Brahman during twelve years of his studentship or Brahmāchārya. This, according to Gautama, was the shortest period, sanctioned only for men who wanted to marry and to become Grihasthas. Brahmans who did not wish to marry were allowed to spend forty eight years as students. The Prātiśākhya gives us a glimpse into the lecture rooms of the Brahmanic Colleges. 'The Guru,' it is said, 'who has himself formerly been a student, should make his pupils read. He himself takes his seat either to the east, or the north, or the north east. If he has no more than one or two pupils, they sit at his right hand. If he has more, they place themselves according as there is room. They then embrace their master and say, "Sir read!" The master gravely says, "Om," i.e. "Yes." He then begins to say a *praśna* (a question), which consist of three verses. In order that no word may escape the attention of his pupils, he pronounces all with the high accent, and repeats certain words twice, or he says "so" (*iti*) after these words.'

It does not seem as if several pupils were allowed to recite together, for it is stated distinctly that the Guru first tells the verses to his pupil on the right, and that every pupil, after his task is finished, turns to the right, and walks round the tutor. This must occupy a long time every day, considering that a lecture consists of sixty or more *praśnas*, or of about 180 verses. The pupils are not dismissed till the lecture is finished.

At the end of the lecture, the tutor, after the last half-verse is finished says, 'Sir,' the pupil replies 'Yes, sir' He then repeats the proper verses and formulas, which have to be repeated at the end of every reading, embraces his tutor, and is allowed to withdraw

A Brahman was not only commanded to pass his years of student life in the house of a Guru and to learn from his mouth all that a Brahman ought to know, he was also accused if he presumed to acquire sacred learning from written sources In the Mahābhārata we read 'Those who sell the Vedas, and even those who write them, those also who defile them, they shall go to hell' Kumārila says 'That knowledge of the truth is worthless which has been acquired from the Veda, if the Veda has not been rightly comprehended, if it has been learned from writing, or has been received from a Sudra'¹

It was in this way that the Rig-veda grew out of the isolated songs and spells of the bards or singers of the first small clans of Aryan invaders of the north west Panjab till it included, as it is to-day, 1,017 hymns and 11 supplementary hymns, 1,028 hymns in all, the supreme Scripture of the priests and thinkers of a continent

From what has already been said it will be evident that no dates can be assigned to the origin of the hymns that make up the Vedas Indeed it is **Date of Vedas** necessary to go further and to say that there is not sufficient evidence to show with any precision when the hymns of the four Vedas were collected together and the Vedas themselves, as we have them were formed Max Müller estimates that the hymns of Rig-veda were already much, as we now have them

¹MAX MÜLLER, *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp 502-6 (abridged)

about 1500 B C ¹ In his *Hibbert Lectures* he expresses the opinion that the collection was closed about 1000 B C The Brāhmanas may date from 800 to 600 B C The Sūtras may range from 600 to 200 B C ²

Macdonell is content to say that the Vedic period perhaps begins as early as 1500 B C , that the kernel of Vedic tradition, as represented by the Rīg veda, has come down to us, with a high degree of fixity and remarkable care for verbal integrity, from a period which can scarcely be less remote than 1000 B C , and that the Samhitā text must have been as we have it about 600 B C ³

Dr Maurice Bloomfield, who compiled the huge Concordance of the Vedas which was published in 1906 after mentioning that the Buddha died about 487 B C says

Unquestionably a century or two must have passed between the conclusion of the Vedic period and the beginnings of Buddhism Buddhist literature presupposes Brahmanical literature and religion in a stage of considerable advancement beyond the Vedas We are, therefore, reasonably safe in saying that the real Vedic period was concluded about 700 B C We are further on safe ground in demanding a number of centuries for the much stratified language, literature, and religion of the Veda But how many? It is as easy to imagine three as thirteen or twenty-three Only one thing is certain Vedic ideas are very old I have noted the fact that the concept *rat*, 'cosmic or universal order' is found in cut and dried Iranian names in Western Asia as early as 1600 B C I am, for my part, and, I think I voice many scholars, now much

¹ *India what can it teach us?* p 53

² *Hibbert Lectures* p 340

³ *Sanskrit Literature* pp 8 47, 50

more inclined to listen to an early date, say 2000 B C, for the beginnings of Vedic literary production, and to a much earlier date for the beginnings of the institutions and religious concepts which the Veda has derived from those prehistoric times which cast their shadows forward into the records that are in our hands. Anyhow, we must not be beguiled by that kind of conservatism which merely salves the conscience into thinking that there is better proof for any later date, such as 1500, 1200, or 1000 B C rather than the earlier date of 2000 B C. Once more, frankly, we do not know.¹

The following table will probably give as clear a view of the growth of Vedic literature, with an approximate idea of the time when it was created, as with our present knowledge it is possible to gain —

¹ BLOOMFIELD, *Religion of the Veda*, p. 19

Growth of the Vedic Literature up to 600 B.C.

External events	Indian History	Religion	Literature
The people of Israel leave Egypt About 1320 B.C.	The Aryans in the Panjab	The Priests gradually divided into Three Orders	Gradual composition of the Hymns and Compilation
The Greeks war on Troy		Rise of Priestly Education	of Compilation
David, King of Israel About 1000 B.C.	Aryans enter the country of the Kurus and Pan chālas	Theory of the Four Castes	the of the RIG-VEDA SAMAVEDA YAJUR VEDA

II THE VEDAS OF THE ARYANS

49

<p>The <i>Iliad</i> composed A Eljah, the Pro- phet, about 860 B C</p>	<p>The Aryans in Kurukshetra</p>	<p>THE BRAHMANAS</p>	<p>Gradual Compilation of the ATHARVA VEDA</p>
<p>Beginnings of Roman nation</p>	<p>Elaborate sacri- ficial ceremo- nialism</p>	<p><i>Pañchavimsā</i></p>	<p><i>Taittirīya</i></p>
<p>Isaiah, the Pro- phet, 737 to 700 B C</p>	<p>The Aryans in the Middle Land</p>	<p>Priestly supremacy</p>	<p><i>Talavakāra</i></p>
<p>Writing intro- duced Rise of the hermits</p>		<p><i>Kaushītaki</i></p>	<p><i>Āitareya</i></p>
		<p><i>Satapatha</i></p>	<p><i>Gopatha</i></p>

III THE NATURE OF VEDIC GODS

NATURE'S drama is on an imposing scale in India Sand storm and cyclone, intense lightning, terrific thunder claps, the heavy rush of rain in the monsoon, the swift flood in the stream that comes down from the hills, the scorching heat of the sun, the crackling red flames of the fire in the jungle, all witness to power beyond man's power

The singers of the Aryans felt their own littleness before these forces, and 'in the faith of little children'

Nature worship they instinctively thought that action movement, creation, change and destruction in nature were the result of superhuman forces And because they saw that all action in human life was caused by men and women, by persons, they attributed the action that they saw in nature to divine persons There are thus many gods in the Vedas to account for such varied natural phenomena as the glorious brightness of the sun, the blaze of the sacrificial fire, the sweep of the rain storm across the skies, the recurrence of the dawn, the steady currents of the winds, the violence of the tropical storm Special interest attaches to the mythology of these gods as given or discerned in the Veda, 'because it represents an earlier stage of thought than is to be found in any other literature' ¹

¹ MACDONELL *Sanskrit Literature*, p 67

Speaking generally, the hymns appear to be the utterances of simple men, who, under the influence of the most impressive phenomena of nature, saw everywhere the presence and agency of divine powers. They imagined that each of the great provinces of the universe was ruled and pervaded by its own separate deity, and they had not yet risen to a clear idea of one supreme creator and governor of all things. This is shown not only by the special functions assigned to particular gods, but in many cases by the names which they bear, corresponding to those of some of the elements or of the celestial luminaries.

Four things strike the student of Vedic religious thought at once

(i) There is complete absence of system in the theological ideas and the mythology of the hymns. There are over a thousand hymns in the Rig-veda. Of these about 250 are addressed to Indra, and 200 to Agni, while other gods have only a single hymn. But the most careful investigator cannot draw up a satisfactory reasoned statement of Vedic faith from any or all of them.

(ii) In this immense amount of verse, there are an enormous number of repetitions, inconsistencies and even contradictions.

(iii) In spite of the many allusions to the gods there is a great lack of clear descriptions of the separate deities. The Vedic gods are not defined. Attributes of one are ascribed to another. Speaking generally, 'the personifications being but slightly developed lack definiteness of outline and individuality of character'. . . The character of each god is made up of only a few essential

qualities combined with many others which are common to all the gods, such as brilliance, power, beneficence, wisdom. These common attributes tend to obscure those which are distinctive.¹

(iv) A careful examination of the Vedic hymns shows also that the Aryans thought out for themselves different conceptions of the gods in the course of the centuries. Gods like Dyaus and Prithivī are passing away. Indra replaces Varuna. Vishnu is not as yet of importance. Śiva, Mahādeva, Dūrga, Kālī, Rāma, Krishna, Lakshmi, Ganapati are not as yet known. The triad (*Trimūrti*) of later Hinduism. Brahmā, Vishnu and Śiva, is as yet unheard of. There are traces, perhaps the beginnings of the idea developed in the Upanishads that all the gods are one under different names, and there is the beginning of the belief in abstract deities, such as Shraddhā, devotion, Kāma, desire and especially in Prajāpati, the Lord of Creatures, which are distinct from the personified forces of fire and wind and rain and sun and sky that were the chief gods of the earlier Aryans. The speculations of the Upanishads are, of course, declared to be part of the Veda, but though verses and phrases may be extracted from the Vedic hymns to justify even the most advanced monism there is a real gulf between the beliefs enshrined in the hymns and the teaching of the sages of later days.

The ordinary word in the Vedas for god is *Deva*, and the original idea of the word *deva* is 'bright'. The universal Indo-European word for 'god' was *deivos*, which appears in very archaic

The Devas

Latin as *deus*, and later becomes *deus*. *Deus* in the Gallic proper name *Deiog-nata* is its Celtic form. In Old Scandinavian *ttar* means 'gods'. In Lithuanian the form *dēvas* is found, which is in Sanskrit *deva*. This noun is connected with the verb *div*, *dyu*, 'shine', the shining of the sun and of the moon. Its use shows that the Indo-Europeans derived their first and most pervasive conception of divine power from the brightness of the sun.¹

Max Müller explains picturesquely how this word came to be used to designate the gods

Deva meant originally bright, and nothing else. Meaning bright, it was constantly used of the sky, the stars, the sun, the dawn, the day, the spring, the rivers, the earth—and when a poet wished to speak of all these by one and the same word—by what we should call a general term—he called them all *Devas*. When that had been done, *Deva* did no longer mean 'the Bright ones,' but the name comprehended all the qualities which the sky and the sun and the dawn shared in common excluding only those that were peculiar to each.

Here you see how, by the simplest process, the *Devas*, the bright ones, might become and did become the *Devas*, the heavenly, the kind, the powerful, the invisible, the immortal—and in the end something very like the *theoi* or *dei* of Greeks and Romans.²

It is useless to attempt to say how many gods were worshipped by the early Aryans. They are generally spoken of as 'thrice-eleven' or 'thirty-
three'.³ The number of
the Devas

Ye gods, who are eleven in the sky, who are eleven on earth, and who in your glory are eleven dwellers

¹ BLOOMFIELD, *Religion of the Veda*, p. 109

² MAX MÜLLER, *India: What can it teach us?* pp. 218-9

³ *Rig-veda*, i. 34. 11, viii. 30. 2

in the (atmospheric) waters, do ye welcome this our offering¹

The 'thirty-three' did not include all

With all the deities, three times eleven, here in close alliance with the Maruts, Bhrigus, Floods,

Accordant, of one mind with Sūrya and with dawn.
O Aśvins, drink the Soma-juice²

A much larger number is mentioned by a seer who is honouring Agni, who declares

Three times a hundred gods and thrice a thousand,
and three times ten and nine have worshipped Agni³

Another says

The deities, three thousand and three hundred and thirty nine have served and honoured Agni⁴

Probably the general conception was merely that there were many gods and is better expressed in an earlier hymn

Glory to gods the mighty and the lesser, glory to gods the younger and the elder,

Let us, if we have power, pay the gods worship, no better prayer than that, ye gods, acknowledge⁵

One other peculiarity of Aryan mythology deserves notice The names of two gods, such as Mitra and

Dual Deities Varuna who had some characteristics alike were often formed into one com-

compound noun (with a dual termination) and this compound became the name of a new deity Thus there are hymns to Mitra and Varuna, and also to Mitrā-

¹ *Rig veda* i 139 11

² *Rig-veda* viii 35 3

³ *Rig veda* iii 9 9

⁴ *Rig veda* x 52 6

⁵ *Rig veda* i 27 13

varunau as one The name of 'Heaven and Earth' (*Dyāvā prithivī*) is the most common of these compounds, of which there are about eighteen altogether

It will be remembered that, in the later Puranic mythology, the legend of a deity half Viṣṇu and half Śiva known as Harihara has an important place The earlier Vedic practice may have furnished a precedent for it.

Sometimes all the gods are comprehended by one common name, *Viśve Devas*, the All-gods, and prayers are addressed to them in their collective capacity

**The collective
Deities**

The Vedic poets constantly speak of the gods as immortal, just as the Greek poets did On the other hand, immortality is said to have been conferred on the *devas* by individual gods like Agni and Savitṛi or obtained by drinking *Soma*, or won by practising austerity (*tapas*) or by sacrifice

**Origin and im-
mortality of the
Devas**

Indra and other gods are spoken of as unaging, but whether their immortality was considered by the poets to be unending there is, says Macdonell, no clear evidence in the Vedas In the later literature the existence of the *devas*, like that of the whole universe, is limited to a cosmic age or *kalpa*¹

There is similar vagueness about the origin of the gods. In many passages the gods are described as the offspring of the earth, sometimes as the offspring of other gods Ushas, the dawn, is called the mother of the gods and Brāhmanaspati their father. Soma is said to be the

generator of Heaven, Earth, Agni, Sūrya, Indra and Vishnu By an extreme paradox, Indra is said to have begotten his father and mother from his own body There is no settled order The same god is sometimes described as supreme over all other gods, and at other times as beneath them There are as yet no regular genealogies, or marriages such as one finds in the Purāṇas The father in one hymn may be the son in another, the brother becomes husband, the goddess described as the mother of a god in one, is his wife in another No general statement can, therefore, be made It was left to later times to trace all to a common origin in Brahmā, the creator or to Išvara the creative personal force of the impersonal Parabrahma

The Physical appearance of Vedic gods is supposed to be like that of men Head, face, eyes, arms, hands, feet and other portions of human frame are all ascribed to them But their forms are shadowy and their features or limbs are often used figuratively for their activities Thus the tongue and limbs of Agni, the fire-god, are flames, the arms of Sūrya, the sun god, are rays of light There is no reason to think that the Aryans made images, certainly idols or images of the gods, or temples implying images are not named in the Rīg veda

Character of the Devas Anthropomorphisms are very common Some of the gods are described as mail clad warriors, helmeted, armed with mace and spear and bow, riding in luminous cars Some of them, especially Indra, delight in the intoxicating Soma juice and in war They are angry, seek to revenge insults or neglect, rejoice in sacrificial offerings They go out on martial expeditions They help the

Aryans against the Dasyus, and the Aryans, successful in their conquests, naturally thought of the gods as beneficent. Among the gods the only deity in whom injurious features are at all prominent is Rudra¹

The gods of the early Aryans are far more like the warrior gods of the Norsemen than the deities that succeeded them in the later ages of Hinduism. The more detailed accounts of individual gods given below will enable the student to form his own opinion, but in general terms it can scarcely be better stated than in the words of Professor Macdonell

The character of the Vedic gods is also moral. They are 'true' and 'not deceitful', being throughout the friends and guardians of honesty and virtue. But the divine morality only reflects the ethical standard of an early civilization. Thus even the alliance of Varuna, the most moral of the gods, with righteousness is not such as to prevent him from employing craft against the hostile and the deceitful man. Moral elevation is, on the whole, a less prominent characteristic of the gods than greatness and power.²

It is very difficult to arrange the gods of the Vedic seers in any distinct classes because the worshippers of those gods themselves did not distinguish very clearly between them. Later thinkers easily read their own ideas into the words of earlier and simpler days. For instance, Yāska, in his Nirukta, the oldest commentary on the Vedas now in existence, says 'There are three deities, namely, Agni, whose place is on earth, Vāyu, or Indra, whose place is in the air, and Sūrya, the sun, whose

Classification of
the deities

¹ MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 72

² *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 73.

place is in the sky' 'These gods might all be one as a priest receives various names at various sacrifices.' 'Or,' says he, 'it may be, these gods are all distinct beings, for the praises addressed to them are distinct, and their appellations also' These theosophic speculations certainly were not accepted by most of the Vedic rishis, still less by the people who heard their songs at fairs and festivals They divided their chief gods into three groups, according as they had their principal activity in the upper region of light, in the atmosphere or on the earth These three groups were called the Upper, Middle and Lower There were however many other divinities whom they worshipped or feared, and a seven-fold classification is, perhaps, as useful as any, provided that it is always remembered that such a classification is not rigid and does not mean that the Aryans believed in so many separate orders of divine beings According to it the Vedic gods rank as follows

i Gods of the Upper World Dyaus, Varuna, Sūrya, Savitṛi, Pūshan, Viṣṇu, Ushas, Mitra, Aryaman and the Aśvins

ii Gods of the Air Vāta, Indra, Rudra, Parjanya, the Bhṛigus and the Maruts

iii Gods of the Earth Agni, Soma, Yama, and Prithivī

iv Abstract deities Aditi, Prajāpati, Śraddhā, Vāch, Brihaspati, Ka, Kāma, Viśvedevas

v Inferior deities such as Tvastar, the R̥ibhus, the Gandhāvas

vi Demon deities such as the Rākshasas,

vii Ancestral spirits or Pitṛis

But though such a classification is justifiable, each Vedic poet seems to exalt the particular god whom he happens to be singing to a position of supremacy and to endow him with all the attributes of supremacy. It would be easy to find, in the numerous hymns of the Veda, passages in which almost every single god is represented as supreme and absolute. In the first hymn of the second book of the Rîg-veda, Agni is called the ruler of the universe, the lord of men, the wise king, the father, the brother, the son, and friend of men, nay, all the powers and names of the others are distinctly ascribed to Agni. Indra is celebrated as the strongest god in the hymns as well as in the Brâhmanas, and the burden of one of the songs of the tenth book is, *Viśvasmād Indra uttarah* 'Indra is greater than all'. Of Soma it is said that he was born great, and that he conquers every one. He is called the king of the world, he has the power to prolong the life of men, and is the maker of heaven and earth, of Agni, of Sūrya, of Indra and Vishnu. In the very next hymn, addressed to Varuna, it is Varuṇa who is, to the mind of the poet, supreme and all mighty¹.

In his writings Max Müller constantly referred to this and coined the word, *henotheism*, or *kathenotheism* to express what he regarded as a 'peculiar character of the ancient Vedic religion'. It denotes that each of several divinities is regarded as supreme, and worshipped without reference to the rest, or that the seers held at the belief in individual gods alternately or for the time

¹ MAX MULLER, *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 533, 534

being regarded as highest the one that was being worshipped, and that they therefore treated him as if he were absolutely independent and supreme, alone present to the mind of his worshipper. More modern scholars do not, however, consider this practice so remarkable as Max Müller did. They regard it more as a species of poetic license, by which a singer magnified the god whom he was invoking, rather than an evidence that the poet actually claimed that the god whom he was then reverencing was the superior of all others.

It must also be remembered that the minds of those early singers were not unlikely to attribute to the god whom they were adoring the characteristics of other gods of the same group when all were much alike.

For instance, Dyaus was the sky as the ever-present light, Varuna was the sky as all-embracing or all containing, Mitra was the sky as lighted up by the morning, Sūrya was the sun as shining in the sky, Savitṛ was the sun as bringing light and life, Agni was fire and light, Vishnu was the sun as striding with three steps across the sky. Indra appeared in the sky as the giver of rain. Rudra and the Maruts passed along the sky in thunder-storms. Vāta and Vāyu were the winds of the air.

Hence it happens constantly that what is said of one deity can be and is appropriately said of another, the same epithets are shared by many, the same stories are told of different gods.

In reaction against such confusion a kind of monotheism, an anticipation of the later Vedānta, appears in a few verses. It amounts to a suggestion that in reality all the gods are one.

One poet says

They call him Indra, Mitra, Varuna, Agni, and he is
heavenly, nobly-winged Garutmân (i.e. the sun)

To what is one, sages give many a title they call it
Agni, Yama, Mātariśvan ¹

And a verse in the Atharva-veda is as emphatic

In the evening Agni becomes Varuna, he becomes
Mitra when rising in the morning, having become
Savitri he passes through the sky, having become
Indra he warms the heaven in the middle

It thus becomes quite natural that Sūrya, the sun,
should be identified with Indra and Agni, Savitri with
Mitra and Pushan, Indra with Varuna and Dyaus the
sky, with Parjanya, the rain-god ²

¹ *Rig-veda* i 164 46

² *Atharva veda* xiii 3 13

IV A CLASSIFIED ACCOUNT OF THE VEDIC GODS

I THE GODS OF THE UPPER WORLD OR HEAVEN

Dyaus

THE oldest among the gods that the Aryans worshipped was Dyaus, and he was probably revered by the ancestors of the Aryans long before any Aryans had journeyed to India. The word Dyaus is identical with the Greek *Zeus*, and *Dyaush pitar*, the 'heavenly father' is the same as the Greek *Zeus pater* and the Latin *Jupiter*. The same name in a different form, *Tiu* or *Ziu*, was used by the Aryans who made their way into the forests of Germany. The ancient Norsemen worshipped the same god as *Tyr*.

In the *Rig veda* Dyaus is the sky regarded as the father of all. *Pṛithivī*, the earth, is often named as his consort, the pair being celebrated in six hymns as universal parents of gods and men. In a few passages Dyaus is called a bull, ruddy and bellowing, referring to the lightning and the thunder. In allusion to the starry sky he is called a black steed decked with pearls. But the fame of Dyaus was on the wane even in very early Vedic times and the names of other less ancient gods took the place of his in Vedic worship.

Varuna

Varuna, like Dyaus, is another god of the earliest Aryans. He is the sky, as encompassing all things, one 'who envelops like darkness'. The name is identical with the Greek *Ouranos*, 'the heavens'.

Varuna, is the great upholder of order, physical and moral (*rita*), he dwells in all worlds as ruler, he ordains the change of day and night, opens paths for the sun, causes rivers to flow, provides that the rivers shall not overflow the ocean, knows the flight of birds, beholds all things open and secret, watches over the world, punishes the evil doer, and forgives the sins of those who implore his pardon.

Varuna has a moral character higher than that of any other deity.

While in hymns to the other divinities long life, wealth, power are the objects commonly prayed for, purity, forgiveness of sin, freedom from further sinning is sought from Varuna with humble confessions of guilt and repentance. It is a sore grief to the singers to know that man daily transgresses Varuna's commands, they acknowledge that without his aid they are not masters of themselves for a single moment, they fly to him for refuge from evil, expressing at the same time all confidence that their prayers will be heard and granted.

Thus one seer sings

O Varuna whatever the offence may be
That we as men commit against the heavenly folk
When through our want of thought we violate the
Chastise us not, O God, for that iniquity¹ [laws

¹ *Rig veda*, vii 89 5

Other beautiful prayers from the Rig-veda are quoted in the Readings. In the Atharva veda, also illimitable knowledge is ascribed to Varuna.

Varuna, the great lord of these worlds, sees as if he were near. When any man thinks he is doing aught by stealth, the gods know it all, (and they perceive) every one who stands or walks or hides, if he goes to lie down or into any lurking place. What two people sitting together whisper to each other, King Varuna knows it, he is there as the third. This earth, too, belongs to Varuna, the King, and this wide sky with its ends far apart. The two seas (the sky and the ocean) are Varuna's loins, he is also curtained in this small drop of water. He who should flee far beyond the sky, even he would not escape Varuna, the King. His spies proceed from heaven towards this world, with thousand eyes they overlook this earth. King Varuna sees all this, what is between heaven and earth, and what is beyond. He has counted the twinklings of the eyes of men. As a player throws down the dice, he settles all things.¹

In later Hinduism Varuna, like Dyaus, ceases to be the supreme beneficent and righteous ruler and appears merely as a god of the ocean. With his disappearance there would seem to have gone from Indian religious life what might have been a great impulse towards righteousness. The significance of this is more fully dealt with in the section on the Legacy of Vedic religion.

Mitra, 'the friend', the kindly sun, is often worshipped with Varuna in the Vedic hymns. They then jointly rule day and night, uphold the heavens and the earth, guard the good and punish the guilty.

¹ *Atharva veda* ix. 16. 1-5

Mitra

Mitra is one of the Āditvas and in the Vedas is generally associated with Varuna he is seldom mentioned alone Sāvana says, 'Mitra is the god who presides over the day, and Varuna is the god who rules over the night' Mitra is the same as the Persian Mithra The name means 'the friend' and seems to refer to the kindly power of the sun, and the early Aryans must have worshipped the sun in this character before the Persian and Indian branches of the Aryans separated Mitra and Varuna have much the same attributes though Mitra has not the moral power that Varuna has

Only one hymn is addressed to Mitra without Varuna In it the worshipping sage proclaims his sure faith in Mitra's goodness

Mitra uttering his voice calls men to activity Mitra sustains the earth and the sky Mitra with unwinking eye beholds (all) creatures Mitra, son of Aditi, may the mortal who worships thee with sacred rites have food He who is protected by thee is neither slain nor conquered Calamity does not reach him from near or far

Rig-veda iii 59

Surya

Sūrya, the sun god, worshipped by the Greeks as Helios, is in one hymn styled the son of Dyaus in another he is called the son of Aditi Ushas 'the dawn' is in one place said to be his wife, while in another she is described as his mother He moves in a car which is sometimes said to be drawn by seven fleet and ruddy

mares He rolls up darkness like a hide Pūshan goes as his messenger with his golden ships, which sail in the aerial ocean Sūrya is the preserver and soul of all things stationary and moving and is, therefore, called 'all creating', enlivened by him men perform their work he is far-seeing, all-seeing, beholds all creatures, and the good and bad deeds of mortals By his greatness he is the divine leader of the gods He is often described as a bird or eagle flying through space The epithets 'architect of the universe' *Viśvakarman*, and 'possessed of all divine attributes', *Viśvadevyat*, are applied to him

In many passages, however, the dependent position of Sūrya is asserted He is said to have been caused to shine by Indra, who also once carried off one of the wheels of his chariot Mitra and Varuna sometimes conceal him by clouds and rain

In the Rāmāyana, Sanjñā, the daughter of Viśvakarma, is the wife of Sūrya The Aśvins and Yama and Yamī are among his children As his brightness was too great for his wife, Viśvakarma cut part of him away The fragments fell blazing to the earth, and from them Viśvakarma formed the discus of Vishnu, the trident of Śiva, and the weapons of the other gods

Savitṛi

Savitṛi is sometimes distinguished from Sūrya, sometimes identified with him The two names are sometimes employed indiscriminately to denote the same deity Sāyana says that the sun is called Savitṛi, before his rising and Sūrya from his rising to his setting

The name is supposed to mean *Generator*, or *Stimulator* and refers to the life-giving power of the sun

Savitri is pre-eminently the golden deity, being golden-eyed, golden handed, golden-tongued, the yellow-haired. He wears golden armour and bright in his aspect, he ascends a golden car, drawn by radiant, brown, white-footed horses, and beholding all creatures, he pursues an ascending and descending path. He is lord of all desirable things and sends blessings from the sky, from the atmosphere, and the earth. He removes evil dreams and drives off demons and sorcerers. He bestows immortality on the gods and prosperity on his worshippers.

The worship of Savitri has continued to the present time. It is to him that the Gāyatrī is addressed at his rising by every devout Brahman in his daily prayers (*sandhyā vandhanam*). This short verse is as follows

*Tat Savitur varenyam bhargo devasya dhimohi*¹
dhियो यो नः प्रचोदयात्—

May we attain that excellent glory of Savitri the god
So may he stimulate our prayers¹

This verse was in its original use, a simple invocation of the sun to shed a benignant influence upon the customary offices of worship. But it came to be looked on as an omnipotent religious formula, sure to secure salvation from the round of births to the man who understands its inner meaning. In later Hinduism it is constantly extolled. Thus the *Skanda Purāna* declares

Nothing in the Vedas is superior to the Gāyatrī
No invocation is equal to the Gāyatrī, as no city is

¹ *Rig-veda*, III 62 10

equal to Kāśi. The Gāyatrī is the mother of the Vedas and of Brahmans. By repeating it a man is saved. What is there indeed that cannot be effected by the Gāyatrī? For the Gāyatrī is Viṣṇu, Brahmā, and Śiva and the three Vedas.

Eleven hymns are addressed to Savitrī in the Rīg-veda

Pushan

The word Pūshan comes from the root *puṣh*, of which the primary idea is 'to nourish'. Pūshan is the protector and nourisher of cattle (*paśupā*). He was originally the sun as a god kind to shepherds. As a cowherd he carries an ox goad, and his car is drawn by goats. He is a guide and guardian of travellers on roads and journeys. He conducts the dead on the way to 'the fathers'. He is called the lover of his sister Sūryā a female form of the god Sūrya.

In later books he is represented as toothless, feeding on a kind of gruel, and the offerings made to him are, therefore, of ground in a mill. The cause of his being toothless is variously explained. One account is that at the Dakṣha sacrifice Rudra knocked out his teeth while he was eating the *purodaśa* offering.

Pūshan is adored in eight hymns of the Rīg veda

Viṣṇu

In the Rīg veda Viṣṇu is a deity of the fourth rank, less frequently adored than Pūshan, and he is the only one of the great gods of the later Hindu triad (*trimūrti*) whose modern name appears in the Vedas. The name Viṣṇu seems to mean 'pervading'. He seems to have

been the sun thought of as swiftly traversing the three worlds or as rising, culminating and setting. Vishnu's three steps, two near the world of men and one, the highest, in the heaven of 'the fathers' and the devas, refer to these stations, or to him as passing over and protecting all. From this grew the story of the dwarf incarnation of Vishnu (*vāmana avatāra*) at the court of the arrogant king Bali. In Manu the name of Vishnu appears, but it is only in the later Hinduism of the *Māhabhārata* and the *Purāṇas* that Vishnu's supremacy is asserted. It need hardly be said that the *Rig veda* contains no account of the incarnations of Vishnu.

Ushas

Ushas the goddess of dawn, the goddess Eos of the Greeks, is the only female deity invoked in the *Veda* with any frequency, and the only one to whom entire hymns, about twenty, are addressed. Ushas means 'shining one'. Ushas is daughter of the Sky, sister of the *Ādityas*, elder sister of Night, loved by *Sūrya*, but vanishing at the moment that he seeks to lay hold of her with his rays. *Agni* and the gods are said to wake at the sound of the hymns sung to her at day-break.

The worship of the Aryan began at daybreak, Ushas, the dawn, is the earliest object of his morning songs and worshippers sometimes claim credit for arousing her. The promise of the day is hailed with overflowing and inspiring joy, the feeling of relief as the burden of darkness is lifted off the world, as the demons are driven away, and as the freedom and cheerfulness of the day commence again, prompts wonderful poetry, and

the songs to Ushas are among the finest in the Veda. She is addressed as a virgin in glittering robes, who chases away the darkness, or to whom her sister Night willingly yields her domain who prepares a path for the sun, her appearance is the signal for the sacrifice she rouses all beings from slumber, gives sight to the darkened, and power of motion to the prostrate and helpless. In the midst of such gladsome greetings, however the poet is reminded, by the thought of the many dawns that have thus shone upon the earth, and the many that are to follow them, of those, who, having witnessed the former ones are now passed away, and of those who shall welcome them when he is no more. So he is led to mournful reflections on the wasting away of life, as one day after another is subtracted from the time allotted to each mortal ¹

Two Hymns (Rig veda i 113 and vii 77) are quoted in the Readings from the Vedas and will give some idea of the devotion of the early Aryans towards this goddess. It is to be noticed that she received no share of the soma offering, that there are few references to sacrifice in the hymns addressed to her, and that Indra is said to have crushed her chariot with his thunderbolt.

Aryaman

The name Aryaman means 'a devoted friend'. He is one of the sons of Aditi and is commonly invoked along with Varuna and Mitra. Like them he is a god of light, golden, pure, sinless, sleepless, many-eyed, a hater

¹ WHITNEY *Oriental and Linguistic Studies* 1st series, pp 37-38

of falsehood. He is better known than the Ādityas Bhaga, Amśa and Daksha, but has not the same eminence as the great Āditvas, Varuna, Mitra, Sūrya and Savitṛ.

The As'vins

The As'vins are the twin gods of morning and evening twilight, or the morning and evening stars, sons of Āsvinī the wife of Sūrya who took the form of a mare.

The word means 'possessed of horses' 'a rider'. They are described as riding in a golden car, in which they are accompanied by the sun maiden Sūryā, of whom they were the joint-husbands. They appear at dawn, yoke their car, and bring blessing to their worshippers. They are young and beautiful, swift as young falcons, and their car is drawn by birds or golden winged horses. They are the guardians of the slow, and of the woman growing old unmarried. They are physicians giving sight to the blind, and health to the infirm. They are called the physicians of the gods. They renewed the youth of the sage Chyavāna, and when the leg of the royal lady-warrior Viśpalā had been cut off in battle they gave her an iron one instead. Many other similar miracles are related of them. In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (iv 1 5 1) the As'vins are rebuked by the other gods, because they 'have wandered about very familiarly among men,' and in the Mahābhārata, Śānti parva, verse 7589, they are called the Sūdras among the gods. But they are adored with fervent praises by the Vedic seers and they are even called the parents of Pūshan, the sun, because they precede his appearing.

II THE GODS OF THE AIR

Vayu or Vata

Both Vāyu and Vāta mean 'wind' and Vāyu is god of the wind. He does not occupy a prominent place among the Vedic gods. In the Purusha-sūkta Vāyu is said to have sprung from the breath of Purusha. Vāyu is also called the son-in-law of Tvastri. He is said to travel in a shining car drawn by a pair of red or purple horses or by ninety-nine or even by a thousand horses, but to be invisible. Indra and Vāyu often occupy the same car. In conjunction with Indra Vāyu has the right to the first draught of the soma libation. He can protect or prolong life.

The soul of gods, and of the world the offspring,
This god according to his liking wanders,
His sound is heard, but ne'er is seen his figure
This Vāta let us now with offerings worship

Rig-veda, x 168 3

And, Vāta, thou art our father, our brother, and
our friend, cause us to live

From the treasure of immortality, which is deposited
yonder in thy house, O Vāta, give us to live

Rig-veda, x 186 2

Indra

Max Müller argued that because drops of rain were called *indu*, the god who sent them was called Indra, the 'rainer', the 'irrigator'. But it is perhaps more likely that the name Indra means 'strong, powerful'. Indra does not seem to have been worshipped by the Aryans before they came to India, but in India as lord of the thunderstorm he was the principal god of the

Vedic Aryans Indra is said to be the son of Dyaus and Aditi in the later mythology In one Vedic verse his mother is said to be Ekāśṭakā In the Purusa Sūkta, Indra is said to have sprung with Agni from the mouth of Purusa and he is said to be one of several gods who were created by Soma

He was at first only chief of the gods of the air and not originally ruler of such gods of the sky as Varuna and Dyaus The Aryans had worshipped Dyaus and Varuna, the gods of the wide open sky before they came to India, but in India they found a land where the long hot season scorches the land and where drought and famine slay man and beast if the rain does not fall in due season Perhaps they had worshipped a god of thunder in the Asiatic lands whence they had come, but whether that had been so or not, they now began to worship Indra, the god of the thunder-storm, with great earnestness, for to them it seemed that the thunder which so often precedes an Indian rain-storm was the sound of the conflict between the god of thunder and Vritra the demon of drought In Indra's favour was life Without it death by famine was certain Speedily, therefore, after the Aryans had entered India, the god of thunder and rain became the chief deity in the Vedic pantheon, and one fourth of the Rīg-veda is in his honour

The story of Indra's conflict with Vritra recurs again and again in the hymns, and Indra himself is described repeated He is agile, strong, of irresistible might, handsome in face, with golden beard, and long armed He rides a golden car and carries a golden whip Two swift steeds draw the car, created by the

Ribhus, and his weapon is the thunderbolt forged for him by Tvaṣṭri. It is of gold or iron, and sometimes is said to have a thousand points. Indra is also said to have bow and arrows, and a hook or goad (*ankuṣa*). He uses a net to enmesh his enemies. He drinks great draughts of soma juice, even from the day of his birth, 'like a thirsty stag'. The intoxication of the soma stirs him 'like violent blasts'. He hurries off, escorted by the Maruts and sometimes accompanied by Viṣṇu to do battle with his enemies, especially with Vṛittra. Heaven and earth quake with affright at the sound of his thunder. His enemy is pierced and shattered. The rain descends and the land is blessed. Sometimes the clouds are described as cities or fortresses of his enemies and Indra is said to overthrow them.

And so his praises are sung in countless passages

There is nothing unconquered by thee no one like thee is known among the gods. No one yet to be born, or yet born, can rival thee. Do, great god, whatever thou wilt to do

Rig veda, 165 9

His wife is Indrānī, but he has many other consorts. One hymn describes the exultation of Indrānī over her rival wives.

The two characteristics that stand out most clearly in the picture of Indra given in the Vedas are his delight in war and his love for the intoxicating soma-juice.

As soon as he was born, the slayer of Vṛittra grasped his arrow and asked his mother 'Who are they that are renowned as fierce warriors?'

Rig veda, viii 45 4

On the day that thou wast born, thou didst, from
love of it, drink the mountain juice of the Soma-plant
Of old, the youthful mother who bore thee, satiated
thee with it in the house of thy mighty father

Rig veda, iii 48 2

The sensations of the god after drinking soma are
described in one of the hymns

The draughts which I have drunk impel me like
violent blasts The five tribes of men appear to me
not even as a mote I have quaffed the soma The
two worlds do not equal one half of me I have quaff-
ed the soma One-half of me is in the sky, and I
have drawn the other down I have quaffed the soma

Rig-veda x 119

His victories are ascribed to the effects of the soma-
juice

These draughts inspired thee, O lord of the brave,
these were vigour, these libations, in battles, when for
the sake of the poet, the sacrificer, thou struckest
down irresistibly ten thousands of enemies

From battle to battle thou advancest bravely, from
town to town thou destroyest all this with might, when
thou, Indra, with him who makes the foe bow down
(i.e. the thunderbolt) as thy friend, struckest down
from afar the deceiver Namuchi (a demon of drought)

Rig veda, i 53

In the later literature Indra becomes king in Svarga
and many instances of adultery are told of him, notably,
that, in which he corrupted Ahalyā, the wife of Gautama,
by which he became known as 'Ahalyā's lover'

Then it came about that, as Indra had superseded
Varuna, he too was superseded He had at first seemed
to the Aryan warrior in a dry land the very embodiment
of their own valour, possessed of their own love for

soma, and granting them the rain that they needed. When men of different character grew up in a later civilization the presentation of the supreme in Indra no longer satisfied them, and Indra became only a figure in the crowded verses of the Mahābhārata or in the stories in the Puranas.

Rudra

The name Rudra means 'the howler' or 'the roarer' and in the Rig-veda it also often seems to mean 'ruddy' or 'red'. Rudra is the god of storms and father of the 'Rudras' or Maruts. He is celebrated in only three or four hymns in the Rig-veda and his name is not mentioned quite so often as that of Vishnu. He is generally armed with bow and arrows and sometimes with a thunderbolt and his terrible arrows bring death or disease on men and cattle. He is called 'terrible as a wild beast' and 'the ruddy boar of heaven'.

But he is not an entirely malevolent demon. He can preserve from calamity and give prosperity to man and beast. He is termed 'possessor of healing remedies' and 'greatest of physicians'.

But the main interest in the study of the character of Rudra as drawn in the Rig-veda is that Rudra receives the epithet *śiva*, and is the link between the gods of the Aryans and the demon worship of the races that were in India before the Aryans reached it. The origin of this word *śiva* is difficult to trace if it is sought among purely Sanskrit roots. But it is derived quite naturally from the Dravidian root *śe*, *śev*, *śiva* meaning 'red', 'ruddy' and so 'beautiful' and 'right'. Whatever its derivation the word *śiva* is not used in the Vedas as the name of any

god, but it is used as an adjective meaning 'propitious', 'auspicious', 'favourable,' and in this sense it is applied to Rudra, to placate him, for he was the most terrible god that the Aryans knew. In the later Vedas this epithet is almost exclusively reserved for him though it is still used occasionally of other gods. It is interesting to notice, especially if Rudra means 'red', that in Tamil verse, a thousand years old, the epithet *seyyan*, 'the red one' (*aral pol seyyā*, 'red one like fire') is similarly regularly applied to the god of destruction (*Tiruvāsagam* 7 42, 29 27). As the Vedic period advanced Rudra began to be thought of not only as a god of storms in general, but as an universal destroyer. Then the epithet *Śiva* became a proper name and men spoke of Śiva instead of Rudra as the god who caused destruction. As the Aryans and the Dravidians came into closer relation, the Aryans found that these people, whom they called Dasyus, worshipped destructive demons somewhat like Rudra with blood offerings as they do at certain great festivals all through South India to this day. And it may be guessed that as the Dravidians learned a little of the religion of their conquerors they also found that Rudra, who was beginning to be called Śiva, resembled their own deities in some ways. And so it might come about that Rudra, now called Śiva, the 'Mahadeva' or 'great god' of the Aryans, and Śiva, 'the red god' of the Dasyus were identified by both Aryans and Dasyus and henceforth were one deity. If *Śiva* was originally a Dravidian word this would happen all the more naturally. As larger and larger numbers of non-Aryans were included in the fourfold simple caste-system of earlier Hinduism the name of Rudra,

the Aryan storm-god, passed away, and Śiva, the god of destruction, in contrast with Viṣṇu, the preserver, and Brahmā the creator, took his place and became one of the supremely important triad of gods (*trimūrti*) of later Hinduism. This may not have happened everywhere, and it is only possible to guess at the process, but it must have been in some such way that non-Aryan malevolent demon deities became identified with Śiva, most terrible of gods, and Durgā, most awful of goddesses, in later Hinduism.¹

An interesting example of this oneness of the Śiva of later Hinduism with the more ancient demon deities of the Dravidians is found in the name given to demon temples in the Tamil Districts of South India. In idiomatic Tamil a demon shrine is called *pey-kovil* 'demon palace'. Such a shrine is often dedicated to demon deities with such entirely Dravidian names as *Veppa marattu karuppan*, 'the black god dwelling in the neem tree' or *Māvadiyāl* 'she who dwells in the mango-tree'. In Tamil that has been affected by Sanskrit the term used is *Īśvaran kovil*, which means 'the palace of Īśvaran'. *Īśvaran* is a Tamil form of the Sanskrit word meaning 'Lord' and is applied in Tamil particularly to Śiva. So that in common speech *Īśvaran* 'the lord Śiva'—an Aryan term—and the Dravidian word *pey* 'the demon' are treated as synonymous. And so it may be that the little demon deities of South India are linked through Śivan 'the Red One' with Rudra and the gods of the early Aryans.

¹ See Mr R W FRAZER's article on the Dravidians of South India in the *Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics*, vol 1 p 22

Parjanya

Parjanya is a god who sheds rain, invoked in only three hymns and only mentioned about thirty times in the Rig-veda. In several passages the name simply means a 'rain cloud'. He is called the lord of all moving creatures, the soul of all things, the son of Dyaus, the father of the soma-plant.

Parjanya is really one of the older deities whom the Aryans venerated before they entered India and Persia. In curious proof of this we find that this god was worshipped as a god of thunder under the name Perkunas in Lithuania, on the shores of the Baltic, far away from India, by quite another branch of the Aryans. Like Dyaus Parjanya was fading out of the memory of the Indian Aryans when the hymns of the Vedas were composed. Hence Parjanya does not stand out clearly and in later times he gave place to Indra to whom his name was applied.

The Bhrigus

The Bhrigus were probably an ancient tribe of priests. They are said to have cherished the sacred fire and to have made chariots. Though mentioned as divine beings along with Agni, and classed with the gods of the air, they are of inferior importance, little higher than the Ribhus with whom they are sometimes associated.

Maruts

The name *Marut* was thought by Max Müller to mean 'the smasher' and to be applied to the gods of the cyclone or tornado. Benfey considered that they were

the personifications of the souls of the dead and that their name was connected with *mar, mri*, to die. The name may also be connected with an old Sanskrit root meaning to shine.

The Maruts are thrice sixty or only twenty-seven in number, and are the sons of Indra and speckled cow *Prisni* which represents the clouds. They are also said to be sons of Rudra, and sons of Heaven. They are frequently associated with Indra in his expeditions as his allies and friends.

Spears rest upon your shoulders, ye Maruts, ye have anklets on your feet, golden ornaments on your breasts, lustre in your cars, fiery lightnings in your hands, and golden helmets placed upon your heads.

Rig-veda v 54 11

They cause the earth and the mountains to quake. They rend trees and devour forests like wild elephants. They have iron teeth. They ride with whips in their hands. They aid Indra in his conquest of *Vrittra*. They are the favourite deities of some of the Rishis and are often praised in the hymns.

III THE GODS OF THE EARTH

Agni

Agni is the god of fire, the *Ignis* of the Latins, and the *Ogni* of the Slavonians. Next to Indra he is the most important god in the *Rig-veda*, being celebrated in more than two hundred hymns. The first hymn in the *Rig-veda* is addressed to him, and the other Books, all but two, begin with hymns to him.

Agni is the sacrificial fire of the Aryans, and all the ritual of the sacrifice centred round the sacred fire.

Hence the constant reference to Agni in the hymns, which were chanted while the sacrifice was being prepared or performed

Fire, it must be remembered, is always wonderful to primitive peoples. Its production by the friction caused by rubbing two dry sticks together or by the striking of two flints is almost as strange as the flash of the lightning. The benefits of light and warmth that fire gives and its service in preparing food are regarded as direct gifts from the gods. Thinkers, who are the singers or poets of early peoples, come to see a connexion between the light and heat of the fire and the light and heat of the sun, and then trace the ripening of grain and fruit to the same beneficent power. It is only a step from this to the conviction that all light and all heat are the manifestation of the power of one great God.

Various accounts are given in the Vedas of the origin of Agni. He is said to have been brought from afar, to have been generated by Indra between two clouds or stones, or by Indra and Vishnu, or by the gods, or to be the son of Dyaus and Prithivī. Yet he is the father of the gods. He is called *dvijanman*, 'having two births,' either as born of Dyaus and Prithivī, or of two sacrificial sticks. His springing from the sacrificial sticks is elsewhere frequently mentioned. Wonderful is his growth. His mother cannot suckle him, but clarified butter is his food. The ten maidens sometimes said to produce him are the ten fingers that twirl the upright piece of wood on the lower piece to duce a spark by friction. As he is born on earth among men, in the air, and in the heavens, he has a triple birth. He is also said to have been born from the

waters As there is a fire in every house, Agni is said to have many births and to dwell in every home

Agni is an immortal who takes up his abode graciously among men He is the household priest (*purohita*, *ritvij*, *lotri* or *brahman*) who wakes the Dawn He is the most adorable of sacrificers, divinest among sages, wise director and accomplisher of all sacrifices, knows all the times of the ceremonies and can put right the mistakes of men, is 'father of sacrifices', a swift messenger between heaven and earth, conveying the hymns and offerings of the worshippers, calling the gods to the sacrifices, and he is sometimes described as the mouth or tongue through which gods and men participate in the sacrifice He is the king of men, the lord of the household (*grihapati*) and the guest of every house, friendly to all, father, mother, brother, son, kinsman and friend He drives away demons *rakshasas*, watching over men with his thousand eyes, and consuming the enemies of those who are the enemies of his worshippers All blessings come from him, even rain, but his chief gifts are household prosperity and children

He is called goblin-slayer, butter-fed, destroyer of darkness, bright-flaming, tawny-haired He has burning teeth, is all devouring, roars like a lion, is borne on a chariot of lightning, or on a golden car

As he is endowed with all these characteristics his worshippers ascribe to him the production of the two worlds, say that he caused the sun to ascend the sky, praise him as creator of all living and moving creatures, declare that all obey his commands, that the gods worship him, that those who venerate him will prosper,

that he will give renowned sons, that he protects in battle, confers immortality, carries men across calamity, and can give forgiveness from whatever sin the worshipper may have committed through folly

He is occasionally identified with other gods and even goddesses, Indra, Vishnu, Varuna, Pūshan, Sarasvatī and others

Agni was worshipped by the Aryans in the fire kindled each morning while the family gathered round it in awe. As the clarified butter (*ghṛi*) was poured on, and the flame rose it was a sign that Agni was present and received the offering. At nightfall when the family gathered round the fire for warmth or light Agni seemed present in the flames, a kindly god, ready to guard and bless his worshipper through the long hours of darkness when the other gods had disappeared and all sorts of evil demons and goblins were abroad. Agni was near men and stayed with them. Thus he typified to the earliest thinkers in India the loving-kindness of God.

Soma

In two points the Hindus of to-day differ greatly from their Aryan ancestors. The ancient Aryans occasionally ate meat, even beef, and they delighted in drinking the intoxicating juice of the soma plant. Nearly a whole book of the Rīg-veda, containing 114 hymns, is devoted to the praise of this soma, either as the juice of the plant or that juice deified, and constant references are made to soma in other hymns.

Professor Whitney explains that the Aryans thought intoxication to be a sort of divine inspiration, and so worshipped and deified its cause

The simple-minded Aryan people, whose whole religion was a worship of the wonderful powers and phenomena of nature, had no sooner perceived that this liquid had the power to elevate the spirits, and produce a temporary frenzy, under the influence of which the individual was prompted to, and capable of, deeds beyond his natural powers, than they found in it something divine, it was to their apprehension a god, endowing those into whom it entered with godlike powers, the plant which afforded it became to them the king of plants, the process of preparing it was a holy sacrifice, the instruments used therefore were sacred ¹

Nor were the Aryans who came to India the first to worship Soma. The Aryans who found their way into Persia also adored it as *Haoma*, and said many of the same things about it that the Indian Aryans said, so that it is clear that Soma was a divinity revered by the Aryans before they were divided into these two races, and belongs to a very early time in the history of the primitive Aryans

The soma plant from which the inspiring juice is pressed grew on mountains and has been supposed to be one of the 'milk-weeds', or asclepiads, perhaps that called *sarcostemma vininale* or the *asclepias acida*, which all contain a milk like juice. But the references in the Vedas do not enable us to identify it with any certainty. No modern plant has the attributes of the deified plant of the Vedas

¹ JAOS III, 299

So long as Vedic worship lasted the ancient belief in the divine power of the soma-juice continued. The hymns addressed to Soma the god were intended to be sung to him to gain his favour while the soma plant was being crushed in the press and the juice extracted. Then the worshippers drank and rejoiced, praising the plant, its juice and the god without distinction, as may be seen in the following verses and in the readings from the Vedas

We have drunk the soma, we have become immortal, we have entered into light, we have known the gods. What can an enemy now do to us, or what can the malice of any mortal effect, O thou immortal god?

Rig-veda, viii 48 3

All the gods delight in the soma-juice

Indra hath drunk, Agni hath drunk, all deities have drunk their fill

Rig-veda, vii 58 11

O Soma, gladden Varuna and Mitra, cheer Indra Pavamāna! Indra Vishnu

Cheer thou the gods, the company of Maruts. Indu, cheer mighty Indra to rejoicing

Rig-veda, ix 90 5

Make Vāyu glad, for furtherance and bounty, cheer Varuna and Mitra as they cleanse thee

Gladden the gods, gladden the host of Maruts, make Heaven and Earth rejoice, O God, O Soma

Rig-veda, ix 97 42

But Indra is the deity especially addicted to love of the soma.

Even as a thirsty steer who roams the deserts, may he drink eagerly the milked out soma

Rig-veda, v 36 1

Then Indra at a single draught drank the contents of thirty pails, pails that were filled with soma-juice.

Rig-veda, III 66 4

His belly, drinking deepest draughts of soma, like an ocean swells

Rig-veda, I 8 7.

The soma plant is said to have been brought to the earth from the sky by a falcon, or to have been found on a mountain. It is sometimes said to have been conducted to the Gandharvas by the daughter of Sūrya, or to be the offspring of Parjanya, the rain-god.

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa the Gāyatrī is said to have become a bird and to have brought Soma from the sky. In the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa Prajāpati is said to have created the divine soma and the three Vedas after him.

Soma as a god is said to have had the thirty-three daughters of Prajāpati as his wives.

Soma is said to clothe the naked, heal the sick, to bestow sight on the blind, to give heaven to his worshippers, and to exhilarate even such gods as Varuna, Mitra and Indra. He has a car and weapons, and destroys foes. Soma inspires Indra to conquest.

Impetuous as a bull, he chose the soma, and quaffed in three fold sacrifice the juices.

Indra with his own great and deadly thunder smote into pieces Vṛitra, worst of Vṛitras.

Rig-veda, I 32 3 and 5

Soma is the generator of the hymns, creator of the gods, king of gods and men, elevated over all worlds, thousand-eyed. Soma is 'priest of the gods, the leader of singers, a rishi among sages, a bull among wild animals, a falcon among kites, an axe in the woods'.

Rig-veda, IX 96 6

The hymns to Soma describe the purification and preparation of the juice with much fanciful imagery. The god is said to fly like a bird to settle in the vats. The sound of the flowing juice is like that of a roaring bull.

In later times Soma is identified with the moon. In the Atharva-veda Soma means the moon.

In Aryan worship libations of soma-juice were poured out by the worshipper as drink for the gods. In later times when worship had become elaborate, the hymns originally sung during the extraction of the soma-juice from the plant were collected from the R̥g-veda and made the basis of the Sāma-veda and were chanted by the Udgātṛi priests, while the Soma sacrifice was being prepared.

Yama and Yamī

Yama and Yamī (meaning 'the twins') were the son and daughter of Vivasvat, the sun, and Saranyū, the dawn. They are said to have been the first human beings. In the tenth hymn of the tenth book of the R̥g-veda, Yama is described as refusing to treat Yamī as his wife. In the Atharva-veda Yama is the first of men who died, and he found the way to the celestial world. He gives abodes in that heaven to the pious.

He is said to have two fierce dogs which guard the way to his abode and wander about among men as his messengers, and he sends a bird as the herald of doom. In the Atharva-veda Mṛtyu or Death is said to be his messenger. But nowhere in the R̥g-veda is Yama regarded as having anything to do with the punishment of the wicked. That is an idea that became current in

later Hinduism, in which he is the judge and punisher of the dead like the Greek Pluto and Minos

Prithivī

The earth goddess, or the earth personified under the name Prithivī—‘the broad one’—has only one short hymn addressed to herself. She is generally associated with Dyaus, and invoked along with him. She is the mother of all beings.

IV THE ABSTRACT GODS

Aditi and the Adityas

Aditi means that which is unbound, free, and so ‘freedom’ is the name of a goddess, often mentioned, though there is no hymn expressly in her honour. She seems to be a personification of light as the cause of the universe.

Aditi is the heavens, Aditi is mid air, Aditi is the mother and the sire and the son. Aditi is all gods, Aditi is men in the five classes, Aditi is all that hath been born and shall be born.

Rig veda 1 89 10

Aditi is asked for blessings of children and cattle and for protection, but her two most notable characteristics are that (i) she is the mother of the Ādityas and (ii) that like Varuna the chief of her sons, she can heal suffering and forgive sin.

The Ādityas, the sons of Aditi, are more frequently mentioned than their mother. In *Rig veda*, 11 27 1 six are mentioned Mitra, Aryaman, Bhaga, Varuna, Dakṣha, and Amśa. In 1 72 8 9, it is said that Aditi

had eight sons, of whom she presented only seven to the gods, casting out Mārttānda, the eighth, though she is said to have afterwards brought him forward. Varuna was considered the chief.

In after times the Ādityas were increased to twelve, representing the sun in the twelve months of the year.

Varuna and Mitra assumed special characters, but in the beginning the Ādityas were the gods of the eternal celestial light, not specially the sun or the moon or the stars, but generally the eternal sustainers of the luminous life, which exists behind all these ¹

Prajapati

The name Prajāpati means the 'lord of creatures'. In the Vedas it is originally an epithet applied to Savitṛi, Soma, Indra, Tvaṣṭṛi, Agni, Hiraṇya garbha. Later it was the personal name of the god who bestows progeny and cattle. Sometimes Prajāpati is invoked as one god among the other 'thirty-three' but afterwards as a creator. In the impressive one hundred and twenty-first hymn of the tenth book of the Rīg-veda in answer to the refrain, 'What god shall we with sacrifice worship?' the answer is finally given.

Prajāpati¹ thou only comprehendest all these created things, and none beside thee.

Grant us our hearts' desire when we invoke thee may we have store of riches in possession.

In the Atharva veda and White Yajur-veda (*Vājasaneyi-saṃhitā*) and regularly in the Brāhmaṇas Prajāpati is spoken of as the supreme father of the gods, and

¹MUIR, *Sanskrit Texts*, vol v, p 56

Purusa is identified with him In the Sūtras he is identified with Brahmā,

In the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa Prajāpati is said to have been himself half mortal and half immortal

Prajāpati created living creatures From his higher vital breath he created the gods, from his lower vital breath he created men Afterwards he created Death the devourer for all living creatures Of that Prajāpati one-half was mortal, the other immortal, and with that half which was mortal he was afraid of Death

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, \ 1 4 1

Misery, death, smote Prajāpati when he was creating living beings He performed austerity for a thousand years to get free from misery

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa, x 4 4 1

In reading the texts about Prajāpati it is clear that while he is sometimes treated as a god of secondary importance, later on he represents the attempt to express the abstract idea of the supreme first cause of all things

Sraddha Sarasvatī and other Goddesses

It was powerful, war like, generous gods that appealed most to the imagination of Vedic singers and little is said about the goddesses Nearly all the great gods have wives, Agni's wife is Agnāyī, Indra's wife is Indrānī, Varuna's wife is Varunānī, and so on But goddesses as wives of the great gods are scarcely noticed in the Vedas, and such goddesses as are specially mentioned—Pṛthivī, Aditi, Ushas, Vāch—are worshipped for the special characteristics that have been mentioned in the accounts already given of them

In the *Rig-veda* Sarasvatī is a river, and a river-goddess, invoked to be present a sacrifice offered on her banks, and her influence helped the sages to compose hymns. She is called the best of mothers, of rivers and of goddesses (*Rig-veda*, II 41 16). In the *Rig-veda* Sarasvatī and Vāch are distinct, and it was in later times that the two were identified, and that Sarasvatī became under different names the wife of Brahmā and the goddess of wisdom.

Apas, the waters, Aranyānī, the goddess of forest solitude and Śraddhā, religious faith are mentioned with several other goddesses, but not in any noteworthy fashion. The word Lakshmī occurs in the *Rig-veda* once as meaning 'auspicious' but not as the name of the goddess of good fortune. In the *Atharva-veda*, VII 115 1, many Lakshmīs, some good and some bad, are spoken of. It was left to later and debased Hinduism to accept the worship of such deities as Durgā and Kālī, and to sanction the excesses of Śakti-worship.

Vach

Vāch, meaning speech, is a goddess personifying speech as the means by which man may obtain knowledge. She is represented as created by Prajāpati and, in a legend, that is repulsive, as his mate. Vāch was sold by the gods to the Gandharvas in exchange for soma. She is the 'mother of the Vedas' and is also the wife of Indra.

In later literature Vāch is identified with Sarasvatī and was wife of Brahmā under various names. As Sarasvatī she was the goddess of wisdom and eloquence.

Two hymns in the tenth book of the Rîg-veda are addressed to her .

Brihaspati and Brahmanaspati

In the Rîg veda Brihaspati and Brahmanaspati are equivalent and mean 'lord of prayer' Brihaspati is a deity, in whom the action of the worshipper upon the gods is personified He is the suppliant, the sacrificer, the priest who intercedes with the gods on behalf of men, and protects them from the wicked He represents the priests and the priestly order He is also designated as the purohita of the gods He is the lord and protector of prayer He is described as destroying the demon Vala and driving forth the cows, i.e. causing the clouds to yield their rain

He is also described as the father of the gods, and creator of the gods like a black-smith, to have a hundred wings, to be armed with an iron axe In some passages he is identified with Agni, but this opposed by others

In later times he is a rishi and regent of the planet Jupiter

Ka

The one hundred and twenty-first hymn of the tenth book of the Rîg-veda has as the refrain of each of the first nine verses

What god shall we adore with our oblation?

The word 'ka' is the Sanskrit interrogative pronoun 'what?' In later times this interrogative was treated as a proper name, the question became an assertion, and the refrain of the hymn reads

Ka is the god whom we shall adore with our oblation

In later Vedic literature Ka is a synonym for Prajāpati, Brahmā, Vishnu and other gods. In the Purāṇas, Ka appears as a recognized god, as a supreme god, with a genealogy of his own, perhaps even with a wife. The Mahābhārata identifies Ka with Daksha, and the Bhāgavata Purāṇa applies the term to Kaśyapa.

Kama

In later Hinduism Kāma is the god of sexual desire, but in the Atharva veda Kāma is the desire for good in general, and is exalted as the creator of all. In the Rīg-veda desire is said to have been the first impulse that arose in the One in the beginning. 'Kāma, the primal seed and germ of the spirit' (*Rīg-veda*, x 129. 4). According to some Kāma was son of Dharma, the god of justice and Śraddhā, the goddess of faith. It is in the Purāṇas that the stories of the temptation of Śiva by Kāma is told, and that he is described as armed with a bow of sugar cane, with a line of bees as his bow-string and flower-tipped arrows.

Visve Devas

Sixty hymns are addressed to the Viśve Devas. This is a term meaning 'All gods' and was invented to include all the devas so that none should be omitted when an invocation was uttered at a sacrifice which was meant for all. Later this term became the name of a group of ten deities, sons of Viśvā, daughter of Daksha, particularly worshipped at Shrāddha ceremonies.

V INFERIOR DEITIES

Tvastri

Tvastri is the Vulcan of the Romans. He is the most skilful of workmen, who is versed in all wonderful contrivances. He sharpens and carries the great iron axe of Brahmanaspati and forges the thunderbolts of Indra. He forms husband and wife for each other. He has given to the heaven and earth and to all things their form. He is master of the universe, the first-born protector and leader. He bestows long life, puts speed into the legs of a horse, gives blessings, and is possessed of abundant wealth.

In later times Tvastri is regarded as one of the Ādityas. He is said to have had twin children. One was a daughter, Saranyū, who married Vivasvat and became mother of the Aśvins. The other was a son, Viśvarūpa, who had three heads, six eyes, and three mouths, and was slain by Indra.

He is connected with the Ribhus who fashioned Indra's chariot and there was enmity between him and them because they made a single sacrificial cup of his manufacture into four cups.

The Ribhus

The name Ribhu means skilful and the Ribhus are said to be three sons of Sudhanvan, a descendant of Angiras, called Ribhu, Vibhvan and Vāja. They are celebrated in the Rīgveda as skilful workmen, who fashioned Indra's chariot and horses, the car of the Aśvins and the cow of Brihaspati, and made their parents

young again By command of the gods, and with a promise of exaltation to divine honours, they made a single sacrificial cup fashioned by Tvaṣṭri into four. They are also spoken of as supporters of the sky. Eleven hymns are addressed to them

Viśvakarman

The name Viśvakarman simply means 'all creator', 'all doer' and was originally an epithet of any powerful god, but in course of time it came to designate a special god, Viśvakarman, the great architect of the universe. As such, two hymns are addressed to him

In later books he is identified with Tvaṣṭri. In the Rāmāyana he is represented as having built the city of Lanka for the rākshasas

He presides over manual labour as well as over the sixty-four manual arts. He is represented in one hymn as the All-Father, the one all-seeing God, with eyes, faces, arms and feet on every side, who blows forth heaven and earth with his arms and wings

Gandharvas and Apsarases

Apsaras was a celestial water nymph and the Apsarases are heavenly nymphs loved by a class of male genius called Gandharvas. Some of the Apsarases mated with mortal men. Thus Urvaśi was loved by Purūrasas, and there is a hymn from him to her in the Rīg-veda (v 95). In the later literature the Apsarases are celestial courtesans and the Gandharvas are attendants on the greater gods.

Divine Priests

Manu the first sacrificer and the ancestor of the human race is among the priests and heroes mentioned in the Rîg-veda. There are also groups of ancient priests called Angrases and Bhrigus, and the seldom mentioned Seven Rîshis, afterwards regarded as the seven stars in the constellation of the Great Bear

VI DEMONS AND DEIFIED ANIMALS AND OBJECTS

Demons

There are many kinds of demons, and many individual demons specially named in the hymns

Roughly speaking all may be divided into two classes

There are the asuras, or 'living spirits', the opponents of the devas in their efforts to help their worshippers. Naturally the early invaders considered that the gods of their enemies the Dasyus were asuras. Indeed, the words *dāsa* and *dasyu* are often used in the sense of demon. The demon Vṛitra, who held off rain and caused drought, is the most notable of these asuras

The rākshasas are the second class. They are goblins that infest the earth and are as hostile to men as the asuras are to the gods. They have all sorts of horrible shapes, are deformed and of dreadful colours. The piśāchas of the later Vedas—the *pey* of the southern Tamil Dravidians—are among the most dreaded of rākshasas in the later literature, but they are scarcely mentioned in the Rîg-veda, which may be an indication that as yet the invaders had not acquired the knowledge

of the demons of the original inhabitants which they gained later and which has such important though indefinite influence in modern Hinduism

The Serpent

Though the demon of drought, Vṛitra had a serpent form there is no trace of serpent-worship in the Rīg-veda, and it is in the later literature that the semi-divine Nāgas and other serpent-folk are found. The whole subject of serpent-worship is obscure. It is more than likely that the tribes in the land before the Aryans came there were serpent-worshippers. Such worship is common in South India. The cobra in particular—called 'the good snake', *nalla pāmpu*, in Tamil—is a regular object of worship. And stones on which serpents are carved, called *nāga-linga* are exceedingly common.

The Horse

The gods possess heavenly horses, sometimes winged, to draw their cars. Two hymns (*Rīg-veda*, 1 162 and 163) show that the horse was a sacrificial victim in the earliest times.

The Cow

Though the Aryans ate beef, and termed a guest *goghna*, 'one for whom a cow is slain', there is evidence that they already treated the cow as a sacred animal. It is called *Aghnyā*, 'not to be killed', and from the ancient Persian literature it would seem that, before the Aryans separated into different races, the many benefits that are bestowed by the cow had led it to be looked on as a most auspicious creature. But it is in the Brāhmanas

and the Atharva-veda that the worship of the cow is fully recognized

Sacrificial and other implements

Sacrificial implements, the sacrificial post to which the victim was tied, the plough and weapons of war are occasionally deified. This is practically the same as the modern *āyutha pūja*, the worship of weapon or tool once a year—a ceremony common to all ranks of Hindus—a very ancient practice indeed as the *Mahābhārata* shows

VII THE PITRIS ANCESTOR SERVICE AND WORSHIP

Apart from the worship of the devas the respect for the spirits of the departed ancestors was another form of piety ever present in the minds of the early Aryans, as it is in that of all primitive peoples in one form or another. It is often referred to in the Rīg-veda, and in the śrāddha ceremonies of modern Hinduism has become a very important part of the popular religion, which it is obligatory on even the most latitudinarian Hindu to observe annually at all costs

It has two distinct stages

There is first that stage in which early peoples believe that the soul of the departed, like the man alive, depends on food and drink for its continued existence. Those who hold this belief in this simple form of course consider the soul to be a material substance, or at most have but a dim idea of a non-material spiritual existence. And just as they felt it their duty to provide their father or mother with food while still alive, so they thought it their duty to continue to provide them with sustenance

after they were dead. Food was therefore laid out in the open, and the souls of the dead were called to take it. The Dravidians, even the lowest of them, practised this piety as well as the Aryans, and to this day the Tamil Paraiyan believes with all his heart that if for any reason, such as death away from his relatives or quarrels about the property among the dead man's heirs, the departed spirit is not cared for, it must become a malignant demon.

Here another idea is found which goes back to the very earliest times among the Aryans. They thought that the dead ancestor had to make a journey into some realms beyond this existence, either in the east whence the bright gods seemed to come or in the west, where lay the kingdom of Yama. And so in the days immediately after a man had died offerings were made to provide him with strength, and, in later thought, to provide the spiritual essence of his soul with a bodily form, so that he might accomplish the journey to the realms of the fathers.

Up to this point piety to the dead is an act of service rather than worship.

Ancestor-worship proper begins when the natural awe of the dead, or the traditions of the prowess or wisdom of some ancestor leads to the conviction that the dead man possesses power still to influence the affairs of his descendants. The memory of their great deeds or of their judicious sayings was invoked to inspire courage or to settle disputes. It was a simple transition to the belief that the man who imitated their valour in battle was helped by them, or that the man who obeyed their precepts was blessed by them, while the man who

disregarded them was accursed. And so the presentation of offerings ceased to be merely dutiful service and became religious worship, the spirits of the ancestors thus became gods in the families of their descendants; and the offerings made to them were intended to secure their care for the family or tribe to which the dead had belonged.

The ancient Aryan race, before it had left its original home and separated into different lands, had reached this stage of belief about ancestors and so alongside the worship of the gods there was the worship of the ancestors, or 'the Fathers,' the *Pitris*. Many passages might be quoted in proof of this.

May the rising Dawns protect me, may the flowing Rivers protect me, may the firm Mountains protect me, may the Fathers protect me at this invocation of the gods

Rig-veda, vi 52 4

Let not the gods injure us here, nor our early fathers, who know the realms

Rig-veda iii 55 2

There is another distinction that is worth attention. The ancestors of the great Aryan families, though historically next to nothing was known about them, were exalted in tradition till they become almost as great as the gods, while the fathers but lately departed are scarcely more than remembered. In accordance with this distinction the term *Pitri* sometimes means ancestor of a tribe or race or even of mankind, as mankind seemed to the Aryan singer, but when used of an ordinary man's fathers, the term includes only his father, grandfathers and great grandfathers.

The offerings were *pindas*, balls of meal or rice or of meat and rice mixed with milk, curds, and flowers. The daily *Pitriyajna*, or ancestor worship, is one of the five sacrifices, sometimes called the great sacrifices, which every married man ought to perform day by day.

In this worship the father was the high-priest of the family, and controlled the worship of the ancestors of the family. He alone knew the special ritual which was traditional in his family, and which had to be maintained unchanged, if the favour of the dead was to be retained. He taught the rites to his son and, as high-priest of the ancestral rites of the family, he was its acknowledged head.

In the Vedas the *Pitris* are very often invoked along with Agni or other devas, and sometimes the adjective *deva* is applied to the *Pitris*, the *Pitris* never become devas. They are thought of as living in a state of blessedness in the world where Yama reigns. They dwell in festivity with Yama. Agni is supposed to convey the souls of the righteous dead to their abode, but according to the Atharva-veda (xiii-2 27) Death performs the office as the messenger of Yama. Agni, of course, here represents the fire of the funeral pyre. Led by Agni the spirit of the dead leaves behind on earth all that is evil and proceeding by the paths on which his ancestors have gone, he soars to the realms of eternal light in a car or on wings, wafted by the Maruts. There he regains his ancient body in a complete form.

Each parted member, severed from thy body, thy vital breaths that in the wind have vanished,

With all of these, piece after piece, shall Fathers who dwell together meet and reunite thee

In that realm, by the favour of Yama, he enters on a new life of happiness in the presence of the gods and full of delights

This was the thought of Yama when he answered :
This man is mine Let him come here to riches

Atharva-veda, xviii 2 37.

Yama himself is sometimes addressed as if he were one of the Fathers, the first of mortals that died or that trod the path of the Fathers leading to the common sunset in the West But his real nature is never completely forgotten and, as the god of the setting sun, though he is the leader of the Fathers, he is not one of the Fathers himself

The following verses from one of the hymns of the Rig-veda shows how ancestors were invited to come to the sacrifice

1 May the soma-loving Fathers, the lowest, the highest, and the middle, arise May the gentle and righteous Fathers who have come to life (again) protect us in these invocations !

4 Come hither to us with your help, you Fathers who sit on the grass ! We have prepared these oblations for you, accept them ! Come hither with your most blessed protection, and give us health and wealth without fail !

5 The soma-loving Fathers have been called hither to their dear viands which are placed on the grass Let them approach, let them listen, let them bless, let them protect us !

Rig-veda x 15

The full development of the worship of the ancestors and the appointment of the three kinds of *srāddha* for ancestors in general (*nitya*) for the spiritual embodi-

ment of a recently deceased father (*namittika*), or as a work of merit (*kāmya*) belong to later Hinduism. There are full descriptions of this worship in the *Brāhmanas* and *Sūtras*. The *Epics*, the *Law-books* and the *Puranas* constantly refer to it. It is at the root of the worship of many a modern deity who is in reality some hero or sage deified.¹

Hindu customs of inheritance and marriage are closely related to ancestor worship. Speaking generally, he who has the right to perform the funeral ceremonies and the annual *śrāddha* for the dead has part in the dead man's possessions.

¹ The deification of a hero or heroine is similar to the deification of ancestors. Thus the god of a tribe of basket weavers in Dharapuram in the Madras Presidency is the general of a raja perhaps of 'Appaji Nayak's time' and their goddess is Viramātti his wife, who threw herself into a pit of fire that she might attain heaven with her husband's spirit when she heard that he was slain.

V. THE SACRIFICES OF THE ARYANS

THE careful study of the religious literature of the Assyrian, Babylonian Hebrew or other religions of the Semitic races, or of the ideas of the early Greeks or of the beliefs and practices of the early Aryans shows that all these

Votives for
sacrifice

people offered sacrifices of many kinds. The offerings—grain or oil or soma-juice or the flesh of an animal or even the life of man—were not the same in all lands and on all occasions and the rites according to which the offering was given to the god differed in different countries and were different in the same country at various times. But all sacrifice was performed because of one or other of two main ideas or because of a combination of the two ideas in the mind of the sacrificer.

The early worshipper wished to have a strong bond of union between himself and his god and to secure that it seemed to him best that he and his god should feast together and especially that they should feast together on some animal sacred to the god and often considered to be of kin with the sacrificer.

Or the worshipper was moved to offer sacrifices because he felt that his god required from him some gift, great or small, either to expiate divine wrath or to win divine favour.

The Vedic hymns show that although the Aryans drank soma-juice with their gods, and though priest and

sacrificer shared the flesh of the victim, in the times when the hymns were collected a sacrificial offering was essentially a bribe to secure the favour of a given god, and the Aryans came later to believe that, if the proper victim were offered according to the appointed ceremonial, the gods could not refuse the petitions of the sacrificer

The sacrifices of Vedic times may be divided into two classes. There are the household sacrifices and the greater sacrifices.

The household sacrifices were part of the earliest worship of the Aryans. The father of the family celebrated them and his wife assisted at them.

They were simple and homely attempts

Aryan sacrifices

to propitiate the heavenly powers. The sacred fire was kindled by the friction of two sticks in the central part of a new house when it was first inhabited and the fire was never allowed to go out. Each morning and evening the householder and his family assembled round the sacred flame. The master of the house as *agnihotri* priest of the fire, fed the fire with offerings of wood and clarified butter (*ghṛta*, the modern *ghī* or ghee). While Agni, the god, present in the fire, carried these simple offerings to the gods in the skies hymns were chanted and prayers ascended with the smoke.

At the times of the new and of the full moons special worship was offered, and the householder decorated his house and tied bunches of grass over the doorway, perhaps much in the same way as bunches of leaves of the *neem* (or *margosa*) or *asoka* trees are tied over doorways or across streets in strings (*torana*) in these days.

At the beginning of the spring, of the rainy season and of autumn there were special sacrifices. Twice a

year when the fruit or grain ripened the ripe first-fruits were offered in a rustic festival to the gods. Once a year, when the rainy season set in, a he-goat was sacrificed in the house of the sacrificer.

Soma-juice was part of every offering of any importance, especially in invocations of Indra. Apparently it was simply poured out on to the bundles of the sacred *kusa* grass which were provided as seats for the invisible gods.

The greater sacrifices were offered in special emergencies or by kings or sages to gain extraordinary ends. They became as will be seen later, costly and elaborate beyond

belief

The chief of the great sacrifices were

the soma sacrifice,
the sacrifices of cows and oxen and other animals,
the horse sacrifice,
the human sacrifice

The primitive family worship grew speedily more complex, and even before the hymns in the Rig-veda were collected the idea of sacrifice had so fully laid hold on the mind of the Aryans that all the thousand hymns in the Rig-veda refer directly or indirectly to sacrifice.

The main reason for this was the belief mentioned above that if a hymn was rightly sung or chanted and if a sacrifice was duly performed, it was an infallible means of securing the object of the sacrificer, however audacious. It was thus of the utmost importance that the sacrifice if it were any but the most ordinary, should be performed by one who knew every detail of the ritual.

Hence the man with skill in the performance of sacrifice or in the wording of petitions came to be a person of importance. He was the spell-monger, the sooth-sayer (the *mantra-kāra*), the master of charms, the Brahman or 'prayer maker' of the Aryans, perhaps the same as the *flāmen* of the Latins. The social value of the priest, because he could pray or sacrifice more acceptably than others naturally led the priest himself to exaggerate and emphasize his own office and so a professional priesthood and a regular priestcraft came into existence.

With the rise of this priesthood the performance of the greater sacrifices became their special duty, and though a Kshatriya like King Janaka, the *rāj-pīshu*, might insist on the right to offer his own sacrifice, the priesthood gradually acquired the monopoly of celebrating all such sacrifices, and added ceremony to ceremony till it became impossible to observe the ritual and the whole system collapsed.

A hymn in the Atharva-veda (iii 19) sets forth the power of the priest to secure the prosperity of those who are his friends and the destruction of his enemies, and is an indication of the growing pretensions of the priests as a class.

1 May this prayer of mine be successful, may the vigour and strength of mine be complete, may the power be perfect, undecaying, and victorious of those of which I am the *purohita*

2 I fortify their kingdom, and augment their energy, valour and force. I break the arms of their enemies with this oblation.

3 May all those who fight against our wise and prosperous (prince) sink downwards and be prostrated.

With my prayer I destroy his enemies and raise up his friends

4 May those of whom I am the *purohita* be sharper than an axe, sharper than fire, sharper than Indra's thunderbolt

5 I strengthen their weapons, I prosper their kingdom rich in heroes May their power be undecaying and victorious May all the gods foster their designs

Atharva veda, iii 19

Priests and their duties

Max Müller gives a long account of the principal orders of priests and their duties which may be summarized as follows —

The Adhvaryus were the priests who were intrusted with the material performance of the sacrifice They had to measure the ground, to build the altar, to prepare the sacrificial vessels, to fetch wood and water, to light the fire, to bring the victim and slay it They formed, as it would seem, the lowest class of priests, and their acquirements were more of a practical than an intellectual character Some of the duties of the Adhvaryus, were considered so degrading, that other persons besides the priests were frequently employed in them The Samitri, for instance, who had to slay the animal, was not a priest, he need not even be a Brahman, and the same remark applies to the Vāikartas, the butchers, and the so called Chamasādhvāryus The number of hymns and invocations which the Adhvaryus had to use at the sacrifices were smaller than that of the other priests These, however, they had to learn by heart But as the chief difficulty consisted in the exact recitation of hymns and in the close observance of all the euphonic rules, as

taught in the *Prātisākhya*s, the *Adhvaryus* were allowed to mutter their hymns, so that no one at a distance could either hear or understand them. Only in cases where the *Adhvaryu* had to speak to other officiating priests, commanding them to perform certain duties, he was, of course, obliged to speak with a loud and distinct voice. All their verses and all the invocations which the *Adhvaryus* had to use, were collected in the ancient liturgy of the *Adhvaryus* together with the rules of the sacrifice. In this mixed form they exist in the *Taittirīya Samhitā* or *Black Yajur-veda*. Afterwards the hymns were collected by themselves, separated from the ceremonial rules, and this collection is what we called the *white Yajur-veda-samhitā*, or the *Prayer Book of the Adhvaryus priests*.

Some parts of the sacrifice, according to ancient custom, had to be accompanied by songs, hence another class of priests arose whose particular office it was to act as the chorus. They took part in the most solemn sacrifices only. Though as yet we have no key as to the character of the music which the *Udgātṛis* performed, we can see from the numerous and elaborate rules, however unintelligible, that their music was more than mere chanting. The words of their songs were collected in the order of the sacrifice, and this is what we possess under the name of *Sāma-veda-samhitā*, or the *Prayer-Book of the Udgātṛi priests*.

A third class of priests, the *Hotṛis*, recited certain hymns during the sacrifice in praise of the gods to whom any particular act of the sacrifice was addressed. Their recitation was loud and distinct, and required the most accurate knowledge of the rules of euphony or *Śikshā*.

The Hotṛis, as a class, were the most highly educated order of priests. They were supposed to know both the proper pronunciation and the meaning of their hymns, the order and employment of which was taught in the Brāhmanas of the Bahvṛichas. But, while both the Adhvaryus and Udgātṛis were confessedly unable to perform their duties without the help of their Prayer Books, the Hotṛis were supposed to be so well versed in the ancient sacred poetry, as contained in the ten Mandalas of the Rīg veda, that no separate Prayer Book or Samhitā was ever arranged for their special benefit.

The Hotṛi learnt, from the Brāhmana, or in later times, from the Sūtra, what special duties he had to perform. He knew from these sources the beginnings or the names of the hymns which he had to recite in every part of the service.

The most ancient name for a priest by profession was *Purohita*, which only means one placed before. The original occupation of the *Purohita* may simply have been to perform the usual sacrifices, but, with the ambitious policy of the Brahmans, it soon became a stepping-stone to political power. Thus we read in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa

Breath does not leave him before time, he lives to an old age, he goes to his full time, and does not die again, who has a Brahman as guardian of his land, as *Purohita*. He conquers power by power, obtains strength by strength, the people obey him, peaceful and of one mind.¹

¹ Abridged from MAX MULLER, *Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, pp. 471-487.

Briefly put the three definite orders among the Brahmans, their Vedas and their names are

1. *hotri* means 'sacrificer' from *hu* = pour on the fire The *hotri* recites *richas*, 'praises' hence comes the *Rig veda*

2. *udgātri* means 'singer' from *udga* = sing The *udagatri* raises *sāman* 'chants' hence comes the *Sāma-veda*

3. *adhvaryu* means 'working priest' from *adhvara* = a ritual act The *adhvaryu* mutters *yajunsi*, 'sacrificial formulae' hence comes the *Yajur-veda*

It is not worth while to attempt to draw up a list of all the implements and utensils that were used in sacrifices, after sacrifice had been developed in the times of the Brāhmanas. Many The sacrificial instruments pots, three kinds of ladles for pouring clarified butter on the fire, a smaller ladle or spoon for conveying the butter from the pot to larger ladles, caldrons, beakers, the sacred kusa grass, on which the gods might sit and on which soma-juice was poured out are all mentioned in the Atharva-veda (xviii 4). The *yāpa* was the post to which the animal victim was tied. There were, of course, knives and choppers for cutting up the victim. The *sphya* was a wooden instrument shaped something like a sword for stirring the boiling rice, or perhaps for trimming the mound used as an altar. One of the priests had to hold it up high so long as the chief ceremonies lasted to keep off evil spirits¹

There was also the press-stone for crushing the soma-plant. All of these were multiplied or modified as the ritual of the great sacrifices was developed.

The first of these great sacrifices, originally a very simple act, was the soma sacrifice. Though a book of

¹ MURDOCH, *Account of Vedas*, p. 54

the Rig-veda and the whole of the Sāma-veda were eventually devoted to the chants to be raised during

The soma sacrifice the performance of the soma sacrifices no clear idea of the ceremonies can be gained from those books It is from

the Brāhmanas of the Sāma-veda that the needful information has to be obtained, and when it has been obtained it is not of very clear significance In fact there is little of interest in these soma sacrifices They were celebrated in a variety of ways It may be imagined that originally the juice of the plant was merely crushed from its stems and collected, and then part was poured out for the gods and part was drunk by the worshippers But this simplicity soon departed

One soma sacrifice, the Agnishtoma, celebrated in spring-time was in praise of Agni, it required the ministrations of sixteen priests It occupied only one day, during which the soma-juice was pressed from the plant, the essential part of the ceremony, three times, but there were detailed preparatory rites, including the initiation (*dīksha*) of the man who made the sacrifice and his wife

There is one classification of the soma sacrifices according to the length of time which they lasted which shows that they extended to as many as twelve days in one case This last sacrifice could only be performed by Brahmins, which is an indication that it belongs to the later Vedic times, a large number of Brahmins must join to perform it, and they might lengthen out the rites to a hundred days, or to some years The objects for which the sacrifice was offered were offspring, cattle, wealth, fame, theological learning, skill to perform cere

monies, and heaven For gaining heaven a soma-sacrifice was indispensable, for the sacred soma juice was thought to unite the sacrificer with the celestial king Soma and so to make the worshipper an associate of the gods and an inhabitant of the celestial world ¹

Animal sacrifices were always of a more or less special character among the Aryans According to the Atharva-veda (xii 2 48) a draft-ox was burned **Animal sacrifices** with the corpse of a dead man presumably for the dead to ride in the next world The goat and the horse were sacrificed together at the horse-sacrifice ² At one sacrifice, probably a very unusual sacrifice, performed once in five years, called the *Pañcha sarāḍīya sava*, seventeen young cows were offered Bullocks, buffaloes and deer were also sacrificed, sometimes in large numbers The White Yajur-veda mentions 327 domestic animals, including oxen, cows, milch-cows that were to be offered along with the horse at the great horse sacrifice, and the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa mentions 180 domestic animals, such as cows, bulls, goats that are to be sacrificed ³ But though it is quite clear that animals were offered it is not easy to see how, even great kings could command such holocausts In Vedic times they were impossible in the form in which they are described in the White Yajur-veda and in the Brāhmaṇas Unfortunately it is from these later sacrificial manuals that accounts of these sacrifices have to be obtained

Reference has been made in the first section of this

¹ HAUG, *Aitareya Brāhmaṇa*, Introduction, quoted in Macdonald's *Brāhmaṇas*, 17, 132

² *Rig-veda*, i 162 2, 9 and i 163 12

³ *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, ii 651

book to Dr Rajendralala Mitra's careful papers on the whole subject of meat-eating, animal sacrifices and human sacrifices collected and published in 1881 in two volumes under the title *The Indo-Aryans*¹ His investigations and those of other scholars on the subject seem to establish the following facts

The Āśvalāyana Sūtra mentions several sacrifices of which the slaughter of cattle formed a part One of them, in the Gṛhya Sūtra, is worthy of special notice As it is called *Śūlagava*, or 'spitted cow'

In the Brāhmanas there are many rules laid down for many kinds of Cow sacrifices Going back to the ancient Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa, of the Black Yajur veda, 'that grand store house of Vedic rituals which affords the fullest insight into the religious life of ancient India,' as Dr Rajendralala Mitra calls it, many ceremonies are named, which required the meat of cattle for their performance, and considerable stress is laid on the kind and character of the cattle which should be slaughtered for the supply of meat for the gratification of particular divinities² The following summary presents the main facts

Thus, among the *Kāmya Istis*, or minor sacrifices with special prayers, we have to sacrifice a dwarf ox to Viṣṇu, a drooping-horned bull with a blaze on the forehead to Indra as the author of sacrifices or as the destroyer of Vṛitra, a thick-legged cow (*Prisni sakthi*) to the same as the regent of wind, a white blazed drooping-horned bull to the same, as the destroyer of enemies, or as the wielder of the thunder bolt, a barren cow to Viṣṇu and Varuna, a bull that has

¹ Published by Newman, Calcutta, in 1881

² *Indo-Aryans* see vol 1, pp 361-3, 374-6

been already sanctified at a marriage or other ceremony to Indra and Agni, a polled ox to Brahmanāspati, a black cow to Pūshan, the cow that has brought forth only once to Vāyu, a brown ox to Indra, the invigorator of our faculties, a speckled or piebald ox to Sāvita, a cow having two colours to Mitra and Varuna, a red cow to Rudra, a white barren cow to Sūrya, a white ox to Mitra, a cow fit to conceive to Bhaga, etc. In a rule in connexion with the Aśvamedha, the same authority lays down that sacrificial animals should differ in caste, colour, age, etc., according to the gods for whom they are designed.¹

In the larger ceremonies, such as the Rājasuya, the Vājapeya, and the Aśvamedha, the slaughter of cattle was an invariable accompaniment. Of the first two the Go-sava formed an integral part, and it ensured to the performer independent dominion in this world, and perfect freedom in the next to saunter about as he liked, even as the cow roams untrammelled in the forest.²

In its account of the Aśvamedha, the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa recommends 180 domestic animals to be sacrificed, including horses, bulls, cows, goats, deer, nilgaos.³ A number of wild animals were, likewise, on such occasions, brought to the sacrificial posts, but they were invariably let loose after consecration. The authority, however, does not distinctly say how many heads of cattle were required for the purpose, the number, perhaps, varied according to the exigencies of the guests, among whom crowned heads with their unwieldy retinues formed so prominent a part, and whose requirements were regulated by a royal standard. But even the strictly ceremonial offering was not, evidently, completed with a solitary cow or two. Out

¹ *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, ii p 658. ² *Taittirīya Aranyaka*

³ *Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa*, ii, 651

of the 'ten times eighteen' heads required, a great many must have been bulls, cows and heifers of diverse colours and ages

The Brāhmana notices another ceremony in which a large number of cattle were immolated for the gratification of the Maruts and the enjoyment of their worshippers. This was called the *Pañcha sarādiya sava*, or the 'quinquennium of autumnal sacrifices'. It evidently held the same position in ancient India which Durgā Pūjā does in the calendar of modern Hindus. It used to be celebrated, as its name implies, for five years successively, the period of the ceremony being limited to five days on each occasion, beginning with the new moon which would be in conjunction with the Viśākhā constellation. This happened in September or October. The most important elements of the ceremony were seventeen five year old, humpless, dwarf bulls, and as many dwarf heifers under three years. The former were duly consecrated, and then liberated, and the latter, after proper invocations and ceremonial observances, immolated, three on each day, the remaining two being added to the sacrifice on the last day, to celebrate the conclusion of the ceremony for the year. The Tāṇḍya Brāhmana of the Sāmaveda notices this ceremony, but it recommends cattle of a different colour for each successive year. According to it the seventh or eighth of the waxing moon in Aśvini for the first year, and the 6th of Kṛttikā for the following years were the more appropriate for it. The origin of the sacrifice, according to a Vedic legend, is due to Prajāpati. Once on a time he wished to be rich in wealth and dependents, 'he perceived the *Pañcha sarādiya*, he seized it, and performed a sacrifice with it, and thereby became great in wealth and dependents'. 'Whoever wishes to be great,' adds the Veda, 'let him worship through the *Pañcha sarādiya*. Thereby, verily, he will be great'.¹ Elsewhere it is

¹ *Taittirīya Brāhmana* II 2

said that 'this ceremony ensures thoroughly independent dominion, and that a sage of the name of Kāndama attained it through this means

'That the animal slaughtered was intended for food,' says Dr R Mitra, 'is evident from the directions given in the Aśvalāvana Sūtra to eat of the remains of the offering, but to remove all doubt on the subject I shall quote here a passage from the Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa in which the mode of cutting up the victim after immolation is described in detail it is scarcely to be supposed that the animal would be so divided if there was no necessity for distribution'

A few extracts from this passage will be sufficient here

Separate its hide so that it may remain entire Cut open its breast so as to make it appear like an eagle (with spread wings) Separate the forearms, divide the arms into spokes, separate successively in order the twenty-six ribs Dig a trench for burying the excrements Throw away the blood to the rākshasas O slaver of cattle, O Adhriḡu, accomplish your task; accomplish it according to rules

The Gopatha Brāhmaṇa of the Atharva veda gives in detail the names of the different individuals who are to receive shares of the meat for the parts they take in the ceremony The following are a few of them

The Prastā is to receive the two jaws along with the tongue the Pratiharta, the neck and the hump, the Udrīta the eagle like wings the Nasta the right arm the Sadāsva the left arm the householder who ordains the sacrifice the two right feet, his wife, the two left feet etc

Diverse imprecations are hurled against those who

venture to depart from this order of distribution. The shares differed but all were allowed plentiful libations of soma juice

It is impossible to think that such an elaborate ritual was ever observed in more ancient Vedic times. But, on the other hand, it is obvious that sacrifices of cows must have been offered in those more ancient days for they would not have been carried on in a later age without the sanction of earlier usage and it may fairly be concluded that these animal sacrifices were simple sacrificial feasts in which the god and his worshipper shared together the flesh of the sacred animal were part of the original worship of the earliest Aryans

The *Aśvamedha* or horse-sacrifice was one of the most imposing of the great sacrifices (*mahākratu*)

The Horse sacrifice

Two hymns in the Rig-veda show that it was performed from the very earliest times (*Rig-veda*, 1 162 and 163)

It is fully described in the White Yajur-veda and in the Śatapatha and Taittirīya Brāhmanas, and was regarded as the most important and efficacious of animal sacrifices. It was a sacrifice that in later times could only be offered by a king of undisputed authority, for the sacrificial horse was allowed to wander for a whole year at will, followed by the army of the king performing the rite. If any chief dared to interfere with the horse his territory was seized, if he did not, he acknowledged himself to be a feudatory of the king who had sent out the horse. In either case the horse showed the way to conquest and if it survived the year it was clear proof of its owner's undisputed power. In earlier times it may have been a sacrifice offered before a chief set

out on an invading expedition into the territory of rival chieftains, but in the Rig veda the object of the *Aśvamedha* is like other religious rites, the acquiring of wealth and posterity.

May this good steed bring us all-sustaining riches,
wealth in good kine, good horses, manly offspring

Freedom from sin may Aditi vouchsafe us the steed
with our oblations gain us lordship

Rig-veda, i 162 22

It was in the later ritual that it was generally intended to secure victory and prosperity to the king who performed it, and many kings are said to have celebrated it for this purpose.

Yudhistira sacrificed a horse after the great war with the Kurus, to expiate all the sin of the war, and the *Aśvamedha Parva* of the *Mahābhārata* describes it. It was also performed to secure an heir to a king, and the *Balakānda* of the *Rāmāyana* tells how Dasaratha the father of Rama celebrated it before the birth of Rama. Practically our knowledge of the ritual is derived from these later accounts.

According to them the sacrifice began in the spring or summer. Then the animal after selection roamed with its body guard of a hundred princes, a hundred nobles and a hundred servitors, while thanksgiving and the recital of the Vedas occupied those who remained in the king's city. When the year had expired the sacrifice was completed. It took three days, during which soma juice was pressed, the horse was bathed, and other animal sacrifices were performed. On the third day the horse was bound to the sacrificial post covered with a cloth and killed or suffocated. If the king wanted an

her the chief queen had to remain under the cover with the dead horse all night.

Thus in the Rāmāyana the horse sacrifice is employed by the childless Dasaratha as the means of obtaining sons. In the Balākānda it is said that his principal queen, Kausalyā, 'with three strokes slew that horse, experiencing great glee. And with the view of reaping merit, Kausalyā, with an undisturbed heart, passed one night with that horse.' According to the Rāmāyana, she acquired so much merit in this way that she bore Rama. There is no trace of this obscenity in the Rīg-veda, and it may be cited as a conspicuous instance of the degradation of worship that was possible in the time of the Brāhmanas.¹

When the queen had left the horse it was cut up and roasted. On the third day the king who had celebrated the sacrifice bathed, and gave gifts to the officiants.

That the horse was killed and its flesh cooked is evident from the following extract from the Rīg-veda.

What from thy body which with fire is roasted,
when thou art set upon the spit, distilleth,—

Let not that lie on earth or grass neglected, but to
the longing gods let all be offered.

They who, observing that the horse is ready, call
out and say, 'The smell is good' remove it,

And, craving meat, await the distribution,—may
their approving help promote our labour.

The trial-fork of the flesh cooking caldron, the
vessels out of which the broth is sprinkled,

The warming pots, the covers of the dishes, hooks,
carving boards,—all these attend the charger.

The four and thirty ribs of the swift charger, kin to
the gods, the slayer's hatchet pierces.

¹ WILSON, *Rīg veda* ii 13

Cut ye with skill, so that the parts be flawless, and
piece by piece declaring them dissect them

Rig-veda, i 162 11-13, 18

This hymn would be nonsense if the horse was not really killed and cooked. That the horse was to be actually immolated and that the body was cut up into fragments is clear, that these fragments were dressed, partly boiled, and partly roasted, is also undisputable, and although the expressions may be differently understood, yet there is little reason to doubt that part of the flesh was eaten by the assistants, part presented as a burnt offering to the gods¹

The horse, however, was comforted in the same hymn by the thought that it was going to the gods —

Let not thy dear soul burn thee as thou comest, let
not the hatchet linger in thy body

Let not a greedy clumsy immolator, missing the
joints, mangle thy limbs unduly

No, here thou diest not, thou art not injured, by
easy paths unto the gods thou goest

The bays, the splendid deer are now thy fellows,
and to the ass's pole is yoked the charger

Rig-veda, i 62 20, 21

The belief in the efficacy of human sacrifice is very ancient and widespread. Arabs, Canaanites, Moabites, Carthaginians, Greeks, Romans, Teutons, Britons and scores of other races and tribes have all practised it in various forms. In all cases there was the idea that such a terrible offering must be peculiarly efficacious. Such sacrifices in India have always been associated with the

¹ WILSON, *Introduction to Translation of Rig-veda*, vol II, pp VIII-XIV

indigenous deities worshipped by the Dravidian tribes. It was to such gods that human lives were offered when a newly excavated tank failed to produce sufficient water, or when a temple wall cracked, or the foundation of a bridge gave way. The fierce and cruel goddesses of later Hinduism, Chāmundā, Chandī, Durgā, Kālī, Mān and their sisters were really exalted Dravidian goddesses, and are declared to be appeased by human lives.

In modern times the offering to these goddesses is usually the blood of sheep, goats or fowls but occasionally a devoted worshipper will offer a few drops of blood.

'The offering of one's own blood' says Dr Rajendra-lala Mitra, 'to the goddess is a mediaeval and modern

Blood offerings rite. It is made by women, and there

is scarcely a respectable house in all Bengal, the mistress of which has not, at one time or other, shed her blood under the notion of satisfying the goddess by the operation. Whenever her husband or a son is dangerously ill, a vow is made that, on the recovery of the patient, the goddess would be regaled with human blood, and in the first Durgā Pūjā following, or at the temple at Kālighāt, or at some other sacred fane, the lady performs certain ceremonies, and then bares her breast in the presence of the goddess, and with a nail-cutter (*rāsurā*) draws a few drops of blood from between her busts, and offers them to the divinity.'

In the same way women pierce their cheeks with silver skewers in honour of the definitely Dravidian goddess Kurumāyī at Womur near Trichinopoly.

Such offerings are vestiges of the times when human lives were once offered to these Dravidian goddesses.

These were called *narabali*, the sacrifice of men. The Vedic human sacrifice has the more honourable title *purusamedha* 'the sacrifice of humanity', or 'of the hero', but the two cannot easily be distinguished.

Of human sacrifices (*narabali*) the Kālikā Purāna composed in honour of Kālī or Durgā Devī says 'By a human sacrifice attended by the forms laid down, Devī remains gratified for a thousand years, and by a sacrifice of three men one hundred thousand years' The human sacrifice is described as *atibali*, the highest of all sacrifices.

In India to this day the belief exists and strange stories of such sacrifices find ready acceptance. A case now and then comes into court which shows that from time to time human beings actually are slain in sacrifice. Human sacrifice

In 1900 in the Bombay Presidency the High Court upheld the conviction of three men for the murder of a child named Dagdi as a sacrifice to persuade a deity to reveal to the murderers the place where treasure was hidden. In Bellary in 1901 a Kuruba, a man belonging to one of the most ancient Dravidian tribes in South India was convicted of the murder of his own son in order to obtain treasure that the god Kona Irappa had promised to him on that condition. In the Bombay Presidency a charge of the murder of a girl-child to propitiate the malice of certain water-deities called 'maulis' was proved and upheld on appeal against a Hindu woman named Bhagu, wife of Lavman, in November, 1910 and against Umi, wife of Jayaji in March, 1911. In 1912 the quiet town of Bezwada in the Madras Presidency was thrown into commotion because the Governor of Madras

was believed to have performed a human sacrifice at the foot of a hill in the neighbourhood in order to gain possession of hidden treasure. The origin of the rumour was that on his visit to Bezwada the Governor attended a meeting of Freemasons, held of course with closed doors.

The extreme merit of such a sacrifice is evident in many a vernacular legend. One such was given by Mr H R Scott, M A, in a paper on *The Gujarati Poets*¹ in which he relates a legend which appears in a poem by a Gujarati poet named Akho.

Akho was no Brahman or Vaniyo, but a working gold smith. He began by being an enthusiastic Vaishnava of the Vallabhāchārya sect, but he was disillusioned, and in bitterness of soul he compared his Guru—the head of the sect—to an old bullock yoked in a cart he could not draw, a useless expense to his owner, nay, he compares him to a stone in the embrace of a drowning man, which sinks where it is expected to save. He defies current views about defilement, and says it is not external bathing but internal purity that is needed.

This story as recited by Akho is about Sagālshā Sheth, a very devout man who had an equally devout wife, Sandhyāvati, and the pair had one loving and much beloved son Selaiya. It was their practice never to eat a meal unless they could share it with some poor Sādhu or saint.

Once in the rainy season, there came a tremendous downpour, and it lasted for eight days and nights, during which it was not possible for any Sādhu to be found, and the pair

Gujarati legend

¹ Part of this was printed in the *Indian Social Reformer*, Bombay of January 28 1912.

Besides, look at what others have done, and he goes over a list of those who had gladly died or suffered for the sake of piety, such as Karna, Harischandra. So the boy is sacrificed, willingly submitting himself to the knife. His mother is ordered by the inhuman Sādhū to put on her jewels, and dress in her brightest clothes, and show no sign of grief, or of reluctance to let her son be sacrificed.

And so the story goes on, till the climax is reached, and the god reveals himself, and praises the devotion of his servants and restores their son to life. Then he asks Sagālshā to choose a boon—'Ask what you will and I shall give it unto thee'. And the answer of the pious man is quite the finest thing in the poem. He asks nothing for himself, but says—'I only ask, my Master, that you may never again put any one to such a test'.

There can be no doubt, then, that in the Hinduism that has been influenced by Dravidian beliefs, and that as far back as Puranic times, the practice of human sacrifice was observed, though probably only on rare occasions.

The practice can further be traced back through the Brāhmanas to Vedic times, when human sacrifices were offered to Vedic deities to secure religious merit.

The whole subject of human sacrifice in Vedic times has been carefully investigated by Dr. Rajendralala Mitra in a paper originally published in the *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*. Some Indian scholars had maintained that human sacrifices were not authorized in the Vedas, but were introduced in later times, but Dr. Rajendralala Mitra says 'As a Hindu writing on the actions of my forefathers—remote as they are—it would have been a source of great satisfaction to me if I could

adopt this conclusion as true, but I regret I cannot do so consistently with my allegiance to the cause of history'

His paper on the subject occupies eighty-four pages in his *Indo Aryans*, with many quotations both in Sanskrit and English. The following is a brief summary. First there is a description of the prevalence of human sacrifices in all parts of the world, both in ancient and modern times, and Dr Mitra finds that benign and humane as was the spirit of the ancient Hindu religion, it was not opposed to animal sacrifice, on the contrary, most of the principal rites required the immolation of large numbers of various kinds of beasts and birds. One of the rites enjoined required the performer to walk deliberately into the depth of the ocean to drown himself to death. This was called *Mahāprasthāna*, and is forbidden in the present age. Another, an expiatory one, required the sinner to burn himself to death, on a blazing pyre. This has not yet been forbidden except by British law. The gentlest of beings, the simple-minded women of Bengal, for a long time used to throw their first born babes to the sacred river Ganges at Sagar Island, and this was preceded by a religious ceremony, though it was not authorized by any of the ancient rituals. If the spirit of the Hindu religion has tolerated, countenanced or promoted such acts, it is not unreasonable or inconsistent, to suppose that it should have, in primitive times, recognized the slaughter of human beings as calculated to appease, gratify, and secure the grace of the gods.

The clear evidence recorded in the Vedas is next examined. The earliest reference to human sacrifice occurs in the first book of the Rīg-veda. It contains

seven hymns supposed to have been recited by one Śunahśepa when he was bound to a stake preparatory to being immolated. The story is given in the Aitareya Brāhmanā of the Rīg-veda.

King Harischandra had made a vow to sacrifice his first-born to Varuna, if that deity would bless him with children. A child was born, named Rohita, and Varuna claimed it, but the father evaded fulfilling his promise under various pretexts until Rohita, grown up to man's estate, ran away from home into the forest and wandered there for six years, while Varuna afflicted the father with dropsy. At last Rohita met a starving Brahman named Ajigarta who consented to sell to him his son Sunahśepa for a hundred cows, to be offered as a substitute for himself. Varuna accepted the substitute saying 'a Brahman is worth more than a Kshatriya'. When Śunahśepa had been prepared, they found nobody to bind him to the sacrificial post. Then Ajigarta said, 'Give me another hundred cows, and I will bind him.' They gave him another hundred cows, and he bound him. When Śunahśepa had been prepared and bound, when hymns had been sung, and he had been led round the fire, they found nobody to kill him. Next Ajigarta said, 'Give me another hundred cows and I will kill him.' They gave him another hundred cows, and he came whetting the knife to slay his son. Then Śunahśepa is said to have recited hymns praising Agni, Indra, Mitra, Varuna, and other gods.

One may be quoted¹ Its concluding verses deserve special attention.

¹ *Rig-veda*, 1 25

1 Whatever law of thine, O god, O Varuna, as
we are men,
Day after day we violate

2 Give us not as a prey to death, to be destroyed
by thee in wrath,
To thy fierce anger when displeased

3 To gain thy mercy, Varuna, with hymns we
bind thy heart, as binds
The charioteer his tethered horse

4 They flee from me dispirited, bent only on
obtaining wealth,
As to their nests the birds of air

5 When shall we bring, to be appeased, the hero,
lord of warrior might,
Him, the far-seeing Varuna?

6 This, this with joy, they both accept in common
never do they fail
The ever-faithful worshipper

7 He knows the path of birds that fly through
heaven, and, sovran of the sea,
He knows the ships that are thereon

8 True to his holy law, he knows the twelve
moons with their progeny¹
He knows the moon of later birth

9 He knows the pathway of the wind, the spread-
ing, high, and mighty wind
He knows the gods who dwell above,

10 Varuna, true to holy law, sits down among
his people, he,
Most wise, sits there to govern all

11 From thence perceiving he beholds all wondrous
things, both what hath been,
And what hereafter will be done

12 May that Āditya, very wise, make fair paths
for us all our days
May he prolong our lives for us

13 Varuna, wearing golden mail, hath clad him in
a shining robe

His spies are seated round about

14 The god whom enemies threaten not, nor those
who tyrannize o'er men,

Nor those whose minds are bent on wrong

15 He who gives glory to mankind, not glory that
is incomplete,

To our own bodies giving it

16 Yearning for the wide-seeing one, my thoughts
move onward unto him

As kine unto their pastures move

17 Once more together let us speak, because my
meath¹ is brought priest-like,

Thou eatest what is dear to thee

18 Now saw I him whom all may see, I saw his
car above the earth

He hath accepted these my songs

19 Varuṇa, hear this call of mine be gracious
unto us this day

Longing for help I cried to thee

20 Thou, O wise god, art lord of all, thou art
the king of earth and heaven

Hear, as thou goest on thy way

21 Release us from the upper bond, untie the
bond between and loose,

The bonds below, that I may live

Varuna, pleased with the hymns of Śunahśepa, set
him free and the youth, disgusted with his father, for
sook him, and became the adopted son of Viśvamitra,
his maternal uncle

Like Dr Rajendralala Mitra, Prof Max Müller
believed that the story in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa showed
that, 'at that early time, the Brahmans were familiar

¹ Usually *mead*, a sweet liquor

with the idea of human sacrifices, and that men were purchased for that purpose'

According to the Brahmanic ritual the *Purusamedha*, as a regular part of Vedic worship, was celebrated for the attainment of supremacy over all created beings. Its performance was limited to Brahmans and Kshatriyas. It could be commenced only on the tenth of the waxing moon in the month of Chaitra (March-April), and altogether required forty days for its performance, though only five out of the forty days were specially called the days of the *Purusamedha*. Eleven sacrificial posts were required for it, and to each of them was tied an animal fit for Agni and Soma, the human victims being placed between the posts.

The full description of this rite occurs in the *Vājasaneyi Samhitā* of the White Yajurveda. The passage in it bearing on the subject is supposed to describe the different kinds of *Purusa Medha* human victims appropriate to particular gods and goddesses. The section in which it occurs opens with three verses which, the commentator says, were intended to serve as mantras for offerings of human victims. Then follows a series of 179 names of gods in the dative case, each followed by the name of one or more persons in the objective case, thus 'to Brahma, a Brāhmana, to the Maruts, a Vaisya,' etc. The copula verb is omitted and the reader may supply whatever verb he chooses. These names occur also in the *Taittiriya Brāhmana* of the Black Yajurveda, with only a few slight variations, but here in some cases the verb *ālabhate* follows. This is derived from the root *labh*, 'to take, lay hold of' and the commentators have

sacrificial ceremonial show, the scrupulous performance of religious ritual was the chief feature of their religious life. Sacrifices of such magnitude, ritual so complex cannot have been usual at any time, and a priesthood which insisted on such impossible ceremonialism compelled the minds of thoughtful men to revolt and to seek a purer and higher method of coming into touch with the Unseen.

The rise of this class of thinkers indicated immense changes in the habits of life of those who had wandered into India with their cattle, with arms in their hands, worshipping the sky and the fire and the rain. The Aryans had now become the settled inhabitants of India. There were many who possessed wealth, many who gave themselves to a life of retirement and thought, and that ideal had laid hold on the imagination of the times. Every forest had its hermit. The result was that the teaching of the sages received the obedience that the priesthood had claimed. The way of salvation taught in the Upanishads or by Mahāvīra the leader of the Jains, or by Gautama the Buddha, put an end to the sacrificial religion which we see in its exaggerated form in the Brāhmanas. The *Puruscaddha*, the *Asvamedha* and all the multitude of animal sacrifices and the eating of flesh among the higher classes ceased. The oblations of soma were no longer offered, and the drinking of soma became unknown. The old gods Dyaus and Varuna and Agni passed away, and were succeeded in the newer Hinduism that arose through and after the Buddhist revolt by Vishnu and Krishna and Rāma and Śiva.

The Code of Manu which was drawn up perhaps about one hundred or two hundred years after the

time of Christ, that is about seven or eight hundred years after the time of the Brāhmanas, says that the prescribed beasts and birds are to be slain by Brahmans for the sacrifice, and also for the support of dependents, for Agastya did so formerly, and adds that there were, indeed, offerings of eatable beasts and birds in the ancient sacrifices and in the oblations of Brahmans and Kshatriyas¹

This reads as if the ancient system was becoming a thing of the past. In the same section Manu says

He who gives no creature willingly the pain of confinement or death, but seeks the good of all, enjoys bliss without end. Flesh cannot be obtained without injury to animals, and the slaughter of animals obstructs the way to heaven, therefore one should avoid flesh.

He who during a hundred years annually performs the horse sacrifice, and he who entirely abstains from flesh, enjoy for their virtue an equal reward.

In eating flesh, in drinking intoxicating liquors, and in carnal intercourse there is no sin, for such enjoyments are natural, but abstention from them produces great reward.

Mānava Dharma-sāstra, v. 46, 48, 53, 56

This is different view to that of the early Aryans. It is illustrated in another passage

Om is the supreme Brahma, suppressions of breath the highest austerity, but there is nothing more exalted than the Gāyatrī, truth is better than silence.

All the Vedic rites, oblational (and) sacrificial, pass away, but this imperishable syllable *Om* is to be known to be Brahma and also Prajāpati.

The sacrifice of muttering (this word, etc.), is better by tenfold than the regular sacrifice, if inaudible, it

¹ *Mānava Dharma-sāstra*, v. 22, 23

is a hundredfold (better), and a thousandfold, if mental.

Mānava Dharma-śāstra, ii 83-85.

And quite a new and spiritualized view of sacrifice is set forth in Manu's definition of the five great sacrifices that the householder shall perform daily

These are as follows

Teaching and studying the Vedas is the Veda sacrifice

Offering cakes and water is the sacrifice to the fathers (pitṛis)

An offering to fire is the sacrifice to the gods

An offering of food is the sacrifice to the goblins (bhūtas)

Hospitality to guests is the sacrifice to men

Mānava Dharma Śāstra iii 70

Though the idea of sacrifices of animals and human beings has persisted in the beliefs of the castes whose religion was much influenced by or derived from the religion of the Dravidians and other primitive races in India, it may be safely asserted that the more truly Aryan tribes ceased to perform such sacrifices after the time of the Buddha

VI. THE PRAYERS OF THE ARYANS

THE man who believes that there is a god or super-human being of any sort tries to speak to that deity in some fashion. And the prayers of men are always worth careful consideration. Sometimes they are the repetition of conventional formulae, or mantras, believed to be grateful to the Divine.

Thus the mantra of the Bhāgavatā worshippers of Krishna is

Om namo Bhagavate Vāsudevāya, 'Om ! reverence to the adorable Vāsudeva (Krishna)'

Of the early Buddhist

Om namo Bhagavate, 'Om ! reverence to the Adorable'

Of the later Buddhist

Namo Amitābhāya, 'Reverence to Amitābha'.

Of the Śaiva Siddhāntin

Śivāya nama, 'Reverence to Śiva'

Of the followers of Rāmānuja

Om Rāmāya namaḥ, 'Om ! reverence to Rāma'

Of the Vallabhāchāris

Śrī Kṛṣṇaḥ śaranam mama, 'Holy Krishna is my refuge'

But prayer is much more than adoration of this mechanical kind. It is the utterance of the heart's desire to god. In it may be seen what a man seeks for

himself, what he wishes towards others, what he hopes and fears, whether he opens his eyes with gladness and what makes him despair. The prayers of Robert Louis Stevenson at Vailima show us his own brave, bright soul. In the book of Psalms we learn to know the life-history, the penitence, the sense of moral responsibility and the longing after righteousness that mark the pilgrimage of the Hebrew towards God. The prayers in the Vedas became merely formal repetitions in after times. Perhaps they had become so even in the days when they were collected into the Rîg veda. But they had once been the real utterances of the needs of living men in a strange world. They are memorials, to be examined reverently, of the religious emotions of men at the dawning time in Asia. Much more than the scanty records of their gods, and of the sacrifices that they offered to their gods, do these prayers show us what manner of men the Aryans were.

These prayers also manifest what the worshipper conceived the character of his god to be. If he did not think his god to be capable of fierce wrath he would not ask him to hurl his thunderbolts on his enemies. If he did not believe that his god cared to save his worshippers from drought, no prayers would go up to the heavens for rain. In these prayers then we can gather at least the outlines of the disposition and attributes of the Aryan's gods. These outlines cannot be clear. The confusion of the attributes of one god with those of another, or rather the promiscuous attributing of all qualities to almost every god named prevents us from being able to state definitely how any particular god appeared to his worshippers, and it seems scarcely likely that the early

Aryan did discern very carefully between the characters of the various gods to whom he prayed. Speaking generally he seems to have had thoughts about the gods, the Devas, as a class, and to have addressed this or that particular god according to preference rather than for reasons that can be defined.

The prayers in the Vedas naturally contain much adoration. The god addressed is praised for his great deeds, his valour, his beauty, his know-
ledge

Adoration

Agni is thus addressed

Agni I hold as herald, the munificent, the gracious,
son of strength, who knoweth all that live, as holy
singer, knowing all

i 127 1

To Agni I present a newer mightier hymn, I bring
my words and song unto the son of strength,

Who, offspring of the waters, bearing precious
things, sits on the earth, in season, dear invoking
priest

i 143 1

Indra is thus addressed

To Indra Dyaus the Asura hath bowed him down,
to Indra mighty earth with wide extending tract, to
win the light, with wide spread tracts

All gods of one accord have set Indra in front,
pre-eminent

i 131 1

Thou, god without a second

i 32 12

Indra is praised for his capacity to drink soma

Then Indra at a single draught drank the contents
of thirty pails,

Pails that were filled with soma juice

xii 66 4

The Maruts are thus addressed

Come hither Maruts, on your lightning-laden cars,
sounding with sweet songs, armed with lances, winged
with steeds

1 88 1

The gods are sometimes praised for their beauty,
One of the epithets most commonly applied to Indra,
says Muir, is *sus'ipra*, or *s'iprin*, in the interpretation of
which Sāyana wavers between 'the god with hand-
some cheeks' or 'with handsome nose' Agni is called
lord of the lovely look

11 1 8

The broad-tressed Sīnīvālī is thus described

With lovely fingers, lovely arms, prolific Mother
of many sons—

Present the sacred gifts to her, to Sīnīvālī queen of
men

11 32 7

The student of the Vedic hymns will notice first of all
that the majority of the petitions contained in them are
not for spiritual blessings, but for the
Petitions wealth and the welfare that must have
seemed most desirable to men settling in a new land,
living in new conditions of climate, and face to face with
troublesome and dangerous enemies They ask frankly
for cows, for horses, for sons, for long life in the land,
for protection from the assaults of their enemies, for
victory in their expeditions against those enemies, and
for relief in times of drought It is quite true to say
that the things that they could see were what they
desired 'The things above', the invisible and the
spiritual are not the great objects of those early singers

A brief classified selection of some of the supplica-

tions actually uttered by them, by men four thousand years ago, will help to prove this

It is only natural that there should be many prayers to the gods for help in the long struggle with the races which were in possession of the land

before the Aryans entered it The in-

i. For help

vasion did not occur all at once, nor was the conquest completed in any brief series of campaigns For centuries band after band of Aryans made its way into new territory, and where they went they had to encounter their darker-skinned foes, and so, all the time that they were fighting their way into India from the Indus to the Jumna or the Ganges, petitions go up to the gods for the destruction of their enemies, and for the destruction of the demons who are the gods of their enemies

O Agni, radiant one, to whom the holy oil is poured, burn up our enemies whom fiends protect

i 12 5

Destroy this ass, O Indra, who in tones discordant brays to thee Slay each reviler, and destroy him who in secret injures us

i 29 5 and 7

Consume for ever all demons and sorcerers, consume thou each devouring fiend

i 36 20

Cast thy dart, knowing thunderer, at the Dasyu

i 103 3

Crunch up on every side the dogs who bark at us slay ye our foes, O Ásvins

i. 182 4

Drive from us with thy tongue, O god, the man who doeth evil deeds, the mortal who would strike us dead.

vi. 16, 32

Annihilate the fools, slay them and burn them up,
Chase them away from us, pierce the voracious ones

Against the foe of prayer, devourer of raw flesh, the
vile fiend, fierce of eye, keep ye perpetual hate

The fiend, O Agni, who designs to injure the essence
of our food, kine, steeds, of bodies,

May he, the adversary, thief, and robber, sink to
destruction, both himself and offspring

May he be swept away, himself and children May
all the three earths press him down beneath them

May his fair glory, O ye gods, be blighted, who in
the day or night would fain destroy us

vii 104 1 2 10 11

Whatever mortal with the power of demons fain
would injure us, may he, impetuous, suffer harm by
his own deeds

viii 18 13

With fervent heat exterminate the demons, destroy
the fiends with burning flame, O Agni

Destroy with fire the foolish gods' adorers, blaze
and destroy the insatiable monsters

x 87 14

Besides prayers for deliverance from enemies there
are many petitions for preservation
ii **For preser-
vation** from dangers Among them are sup-
plications for safety from wolves and
snakes

In luckless game I call on you for succour strength-
en us also on the field of battle

With undiminished blessings, O ye Aśvins, for
evermore both night and day protect us

i 112 24

Not to the fanged that bites, not to the toothless
give not us up, thou conqueror to the spoiler

i 189 5

If any wolf or robber fain would harm us, there-
from O Varuṇa, give thou us protection.

ii 28 10.

Savitar, god, send far away all sorrows and calamities.

And send us only what is good.

v 82 5

May wealthy Indra as our good protector, lord of
all treasures, favour us with succour,

Baffle our foes, and give us rest and safety.

vi 47 12

Give us not up to any evil creature, as spoil to wolf
or she wolf, O ye holy

For ye are they who guide aright our bodies, ye are
the rulers of our speech and vigour

vi 51 6

May they—Earth, Aditi, Indra, Bhaga, Pūshan—
increase our lord, increase the fivefold people

Giving good help, good refuge, goodly guidance, be
they our good deliverers, good protectors

vi 51 11

May the foe's threatening arrow pass us by

vii 34 13

In thy kind grace and favour may we still be
strong expose us not to foe's attack

With manifold assistance guard and succour us,
and bring us to felicity

viii 3 2

Do ye, O bounteous gods, protect our dwelling
place by day and night

With you for our defenders may we go unharmed.

viii 25 11

Prayers for prosperity, for welfare in the affairs
of the homestead and the field, for wealth of cattle and

in spoils won from the enemy occur in almost every hymn The constant references to cattle, as wealth

iii **For welfare** desired or as spoil to be won from the enemy, show that in those early days the Aryans in India were largely a pastoral people, but horses and gold are also among the possessions that they prize

Grant us high fame, O Indra, grant riches, bestowing thousands, those fair fruits of earth borne home in carts

1 9 8

O soma drinker, ever true, utterly hopeless though we be,

Do thou, O Indra, give us hope of beauteous horses and of kine,

In thousands, O most wealthy one

1 29 1

Will ye then, O Maruts, grant us riches, durable, rich in men, defying onslaught

A hundred, thousand-fold, ever increasing?

1 64 15

May thy rich worshippers win food, O Agni, and princes gain long life who bring oblation

May we get booty from our foe in battle

1 73 5

May I not live, O Varuna, to witness my wealthy liberal, dear friend's destitution

King, may I never lack well ordered riches

11 29 7.

May Indra evermore be our protector, and unimpaired may we win the booty

1 102 11

Auspicious Sītā (the furrow personified) come thou near we venerate and worship thee

That thou may bless and prosper us and bring us
fruits abundantly

May Indra press the furrow down May Pūshan
guide its course aright

May she (the sky) rich in milk, be drained for us
through each succeeding year

Happily let the shares turn up the ploughland,
happily go the ploughers with the oxen

ix 57 6-8

O Agni, bring hither ample riches to our nobles
wherewith we may enjoy ourselves

vii 1 24

Shall the immortal sit aloof inactive? O wondrous
Indra, bring us wondrous riches

vii 20 7

May the great lords of truth protect and aid us -
blest to us be our horses and our cattle

vii 35 12.

O Indu, Soma, send us now great opulence from
every side

ix 40 3

Pour out on us abundant food when thou art
pressed, O Indu, wealth

In kine and gold and steeds and strength

ix 41 4

Rain, essential to all pastoral and agricultural prosper-
ity in India, is the subject of many a petition. Indra who slays the demon Vrittra who
prevents rain is frequently addressed
for his assistance

iv For rain

Unclose, our manly hero, thou for ever bounteous,
vonder cloud,

For us, thou irresistible

i 7 6.

I crave thy powers, I crave thy mighty friend
 ship, full many a team goes to the Vritra slayer
 Great is the laud, we seek the Prince's favour Be
 thou, O Maghavān, our guard and keeper

III 31 14

The rain god, Parjanya, is thus addressed

Lift up the mighty vessel, pour down water and let
 the liberated streams rush forward

Saturate both the earth and the heaven with fatness,
 and for the cows let there be drink abundant

V 83 8

Health and long life are among of the gifts that
 all races of men have prized There
v For health are many prayers for these favours in
 the Vedas

O Indra, son of Kuśika, drink our libation with
 delight

Prolong our life anew, and cause the seer to win a
 thousand gifts

I 10 11

The rich, the healer of disease (Brahmanaspati),
 who giveth wealth, increaseth store,

The prompt—may he be with us still

I 18 2

Sūrya, remove my heart's disease, take from me
 this my yellow hue

To parrots and to starlings let us give away my
 yellowness

I 50 11

Aided by these, O Agni, may we conquer steeds
 with steeds, men with men, heroes with heroes,

Lords of the wealth transmitted by our fathers and
 may our princes live a hundred winters

I 73 9

Thou over all, O Varuna, art sovran, be they gods,
immortal, or be they mortals

Grant unto us to see a hundred autumns ours be
the happy lives of our forefathers

ii 27 10

Long let our life, O Agni, be extended

iv 12 6

Accept, O Maruts, graciously this hymn of mine
that we may live a hundred winters through its power.

v 54 15

Be gracious, Indra, let my days be lengthened:
sharpen my thought as 'twere a blade of iron

vi 47 10.

Come willingly to our doors that gladly welcome
thee, and heal all sickness, Rudra, in our families

May thy bright arrow which, shot down by thee
from heaven, flieth upon the earth, pass us unin-
jured by

Thou, very gracious god, hast thousand medicines:
inflict no evil on our sons or progeny

vii 46 2-3

Guard to old age, thy friend, O friend, eternal.
O Agni, as immortal guard us mortals

v 87 21

* To invaders and colonists a goodly family of sons
was the best of body-guards, and men who believed that
it was by their pious offerings that the

vi For sons

spirits of their forefathers, the *pitrīs*,
prospered in the heavenly realms would most earnestly
desire that they might themselves have sons to render to
them the same services. There are, therefore, many
petitions for children, especially for sons, in the hymns
of the Rīg-veda

May we foster well, during a hundred winters, son
and progeny

i 64 14

May the wealth-giver (Agni) grant us conquering
riches, may the wealth-giver grant us wealth with
heroes

May the wealth giver grant us food with offspring,
and length of days may the wealth-giver send us

i 96 8

Help us to wealth exceeding good and glorious,
abundant, rich in children and their progeny

ii 2 12

To us be born a son and spreading offspring, Agni,
be this thy gracious will to us-ward

iii 6 11

Bṛihaspati, may we be lords of riches, with noble
progeny and store of heroes

iv 50 6

May he, deft-handed Tvaṣṭar, give us hero sons

vii 34 20

So far these prayers are distinctly materialistic. The outlook of the worshipper is limited to the things of this life, and to a welfare relating to this life only. There is little of that fervent devotion that rings through the verses of the poets of the later sects whose religion from beginning to end is characterized by devotion (*bhakti*). In this sense the hymns of the Rīg-veda do not reach the heart as do the poems of Tūkārām the Mahratta, or Paddanattu Pillaiyār or Mānikka Vāsaka the Tamils. This is the impression generally left after the careful reading of Vedic hymns, and to this extent the Rīg-veda

vii For forgive-
ness

is a disappointment. There is little in it that speaks of the quest for purity. It is seldom, very seldom that the singers express penitence that is not merely a fear of punishment or longing after other than cattle and horses and long life. The prayer of the Hebrew psalmist 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me' appeals to every true seeker after God, but even in the most beautiful of the hymns to Varuna or the Ādityas there is scarcely more than an echo of it. To the early Aryan sin is error in conduct or worship which makes his god angry with his worshipper and therefore unwilling to protect or prosper him. The idea of sin as that which ought not to be in life or character, apart altogether from any question of prosperity, or as disobedience to the holy will of a holy god, has scarcely dawned on the Aryan's mind as seen in the hymns. If he wishes to be good, it is because he believes that he will then be prosperous. If he prays that his sins may be forgiven, it is because he fears the punishment of misdoing. He may call his gods holy, but the hymns about his gods show that he believed them to be capable of deeds contrary to the most elementary righteousness and purity. But though few there are some earnest prayers for spiritual health.

With bending down, oblations, sacrifices O Varuna,
we deprecate thine anger

Wise immortal, thou king of wide dominion, loosen
the bonds of sin by us committed

Loosen the bonds, O Varuna, that hold me, loosen
the bonds above, between, and under

So in thy holy law may we made sinless belong to
Aditi O thou Āditya

Bring hither nourishment for us, ye Ásvins twain;
sprinkle us with your whip that drops with honey-dew.

Prolong our days, wipe out our trespasses destroy
our foes, be our companions and our friends

1 157 4

Aditi, Mitra, Varuna, forgive us however we have
erred and sinned against you

May I obtain the broad light free from peril O
Indra, let not during darkness seize us

11 27 14

Most youthful god (Agni) whatever sin, through
folly, here in the world of men we have committed,

Before great Aditi make thou us sinless remit
entirely, Agni, our offences

Even in the presence of great sin, O Agni, free us
from prison of the gods or mortals

Never may we who are thy friends be injured.
grant health and wealth unto our seed and offspring.

11 12 4-5

If we have sinned against the man who loves us,
have ever wronged a brother, friend, or comrade,

The neighbour ever with us, or a stranger, O
Varuna, remove from us this trespass

If we, as gamblers cheat at play, have cheated,
done wrong unwittingly or sinned of purpose,

Cast all these sins away like loosened fetters, and,
Varuna let us be thine own beloved

11 55 7-8

Let us not suffer for the sins of others, nor do the
deed which we, O Vasus, punish

Ye, universal gods, are all-controllers may he do
harm unto himself who hates me

11 51 7

I call, as such, the sons of bounteous Rudra will
not the Maruts turn again to us ward ?

What secret sin or open stirs their anger, that we
implore the swift ones to forgive us

vi 55 5

We crave the heavenly grace of gods to guard us—
so may Brihaspati, O friends, exalt us—

That he the bounteous god may find us sinless,
who giveth from a distance like a father

vi 97 2

Wise deities, who have dominion o'er the world, ye
thinkers over all that moves not and that moves,

Save us from uncommitted and committed sin,
preserve us from all sin to day for happiness

v 63 8

Best worth notice of these prayers is a psalm to
Varuna the eighty sixth hymn in the seventh book of the
Rig-veda. It ends with a petition for prosperity, but
in spite of this it is one of the most beautiful, and perhaps
the most spiritually minded utterance in the Rig-veda

1 The tribes of men have wisdom through his
greatness who stayed even spacious heaven and earth
asunder,

Who urged the high and mighty sky to motion, and
stars of old, and spread the earth before him

2 With mine own heart I commune on the
question how Varuna and I may be united

What gift of mine will he accept unangered?
When may I calmly look and find him gracious?

3 Fain to know this my sin I question others. I
seek the wise, O Varuna, and ask them

This one same answer even the sages gave me,
Surely this Varuna is angry with thee

4 What, Varuna, hath been my chief transgres-
sion, that thou shouldst slay the friend who sings thy
praises?

Tell me, unconquerable lord, and quickly sinless
will I approach thee with mine homage

5 Loose us from sins committed by our fathers,
from those wherein we have ourselves offended

O king, loose, like a thief who feeds the cattle, as
from the cord a calf, set free Vasiṣṭa

6 Not our own will betrayed us, but seduction,
thoughtlessness, Varuna ! wine, dice, or anger

The old is near to lead astray the younger, even
slumber leadeth men to evil doing

7 Slavelike may I do service to the bounteous,
serve, free from sin, the god inclined to anger

This gentle lord gives wisdom to the simple, the
wiser god leads on the wise to riches

8 O lord, O Varuna, may this laudation come
close to thee, and lie within thy spirit

May it be well with us in rest and labour Preserve
us evermore, ye gods, with blessings

vii 86.

Prayers for life in the world beyond are not un-
usual They show that the Aryan sought a heaven of
viii For future life happiness and immortality with the gods
that corresponding with Svarga, the
heaven of delights, of later Hinduism

The givers of rich meeds are made immortal, the
givers of rich fees prolong their life time

i 125 6

May I attain to that his well loved mansion where
men devoted to the gods are happy

i 154 5

We pray for rain, your boon (Mitra-Varuna) and
immortality

v 63 2

We have drunk soma and became immortal, we
have attained the light, the gods discovered.

viii 48 3

High up in heaven abide the guerdon givers, they
who give steeds dwell with the Sun for ever

They who give gold are blest with life eternal they
who give robes protect their lives, O Soma

x 107 2

In hymn 113 of Book IX of the Rig-veda, addressed to Soma Pavamāna, the joys of heaven are more fervently implored than in other parts of the Rig-veda and Soma is the god from whom the gift of future happiness is expected.

O Pavamāna, place me in that deathless, un-
decaying world

Wherein the light of heaven is set, and everlasting
lustre shines Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake

Make me immortal in that realm where dwells the
king, Vivasvan's son (i.e. Yama)

Where is the secret shrine of heaven, where are
those waters young and fresh Flow, Indu, flow for
Indra's sake

Make me immortal in that realm where they move
even as they list

In the third sphere of inmost heaven where lucid
worlds are full of light Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's
sake

Make me immortal in that realm of eager wish and
strong desire

The region of the golden Sun, where food and full
delight are found Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake

Make me immortal in that land where happiness and
transports, where

Joys and felicities combine, and longing wishes are
fulfilled Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake

ix 113 7 11

VII. THE MESSAGE OF THE RIG-VEDA

THE student of the Rig-veda cannot remind himself too often of the composite character of the collection of hymns that it contains. Colebrooke's *Composite nature of Rig-veda* essay *On the Vedas* was published in 1805, more than a century ago, and Sanskrit scholars are still debating whether these hymns are the simple and direct utterances of the hopes and fears, the prayers and the fancies of the faith which the Aryan brought with him when he first entered India, or whether they give us his thought when he had reached a comparatively advanced stage of civilization after the sages of his race had long and carefully considered the world around them. The truth may lie between the two views. There are verses and hymns that most certainly belong to the religious childhood, the wonder-time, of the Aryan race. There are as certainly others that have been composed or revised so that they magnify the power of the priest, and emphasize the duty of the worshipper to support elaborate ceremonial and to heap liberal gifts on clamouring ministrants. These mark a late and often a corrupt period of the evolution of the Aryan's faith. A few hymns, such as the Purusa sūkta, Hymn 90 of Book X of the Rig-veda, are obviously the productions of a singer who inherited many questionings and

speculations. If only it were possible to arrange the hymns in the order in which they were composed they would thus give materials for an outline of the growth of the religion of the Aryans from the days when they were still one race with the ancestors of the Persians down to the time when the Epic Age of their history in India was beginning. Because this cannot be **done** the reader is constantly harrassed by the impression that he is missing much of their significance.

If a guess may be hazarded, the hymns of the Rig veda cover a period of seven hundred years, years in which many Aryan tribes journeyed far, conquering and colonizing the great stretch of country from the passes of Afghanistan to the Ganges. Those were years in which clans or families grew into nations, in which the Aryan faith was in close but not always hostile relation to the religion of the Dasyus, and in which it could not but be that there would be many marriages which would bring the beliefs of the Dasyus into the homesteads where Dyaus and Varuna and Agni were worshipped.

It was a long period of expeditions, warfare, adventure, then of adaptation to new conditions of climate, soil, seasons, and crops, while the civilization of the nomads beyond Afghanistan changed in different degrees in different districts to the settled national life described in the Mahābhārata.

There are reflections of all these varying conditions in the hymns, but owing to the confusion of more and less ancient hymns in the Rig veda it is mere audacity, to attempt to separate and declare dogmatically precisely what acts of worship and what expressions of belief

made up the religion of Vedic times. It must be sufficient to indicate the chief elements of the religion in general terms, always with the understanding that the Aryans were many, that the centuries were long, and that what is true of one tribe or place or generation may not be true of all.

Another word of caution must be entered. The hymns that have been referred to, and the hymns that will be found in the section of this book

The various value of the hymns containing readings from the Vedas have, of course, been selected because they are full of meaning, such as the hymns to Varuna, or of beauty, such as the hymns to Ushas, or of quaint interest, such as that to the frogs. These hymns are typical of others equally valuable. But, as Max Müller did not hesitate to say, it must not be forgotten that though the historical interest of the Veda can hardly be exaggerated, large numbers of the Vedic hymns are childish in the extreme, tedious or common place. Many of them convey no clear meaning, or are full of vain repetitions. It is not the rule but the exception to find in this great collection of literature any cry of the soul, any glimpse of a spiritual instinct, any grasp of high revelation.

It is a curious fact, too, that in so great a collection of hymns there is so little attempt to weave the scattered religious instincts and aspirations of the time into a consistent whole, nor any evident effort after ordered religious conceptions of the universe, such as resulted, in the case of the Greeks—kinsmen of the Aryans, let us remember—in an idealized grouping of the gods on

No theology in the hymns

Olympus, and in a love for beauty in things moral which led them far in the search for that form of religion which was truer and more perfect than the polytheism of Olympus. In spite of the many statements in the hymns of the Aryan sages as to the relations of the gods to each other, there is nothing but inconsistency in the genealogies of those gods, and a complete lack of agreement between the various assertions that are made about them. It is impossible to construct a theology out of the materials found in the Vedas.

It is almost equally true to say that though the Aryan had high esteem for many of the virtues, these Vedic poets and thinkers do not present to their hearers any complete moral ideal. This is all the more remarkable for the conditions were as favourable to the formation of high ethical and mystical ideals in those days as they ever have been in India.

(i) Socially the Aryans when they entered India were free from any caste system. Even the priests were not as yet a separate class. The barriers **No caste** that forbade any but the priests to be learned had not been set up, and so far as can be seen now there was nothing to hinder prophet or law giver from delivering such message as he had.

(ii) The simplicity and naturalness of the times is also evident from the part that women had in worship and sacrifice. The hymns, especially the **Women respected** marriage hymns and the funeral hymns, show not only that priesthood had not yet usurped the right to preside at religious ceremonies, but that woman helped in the worship, had ceased to be a child before she was married, received due honour in the house of

her husband, and might even compose hymns that would be included in the Vedas. The position of the women of any race may be regarded as an index of the social advancement of that race, and by this criterion it is evident that the Aryans were not hampered by an unhealthy family system.

(iii) The mental outlook was clearer than it became during the period when the Brāhmanas were being composed. The Vedic worshipper does not

Personality
believed in

deny his own personality or the personality of whatever gods he is worshipping.

He speaks like a man who believes in the existence of his own ego and in the reality of the personality of the divine being whom he worships. The monism of the Upanishads which reduces the Supreme to a 'mere abyss of being' without qualities, which looks on all existence as illusion (*n āṁ ā*) and explains it as a merely phenomenal round of births (*samsāra*) determined by the inexorable necessity of consuming the fruits of deeds done in previous lives (*karma*) may find passages in the Rig-veda to which it can trace some of its doctrines. But, speaking generally, the Vedas show men who believe in the actual existence of living gods as much as they believe in the actuality of their own personal experience.

(iv) Nor was there anything in the forms of worship practised by the early Aryans to prevent, if the term may

Naturalness of
Aryans

be allowed, the possibility of the attainment of high spiritual vision. Their praise of the gods in its simpler forms is

the spontaneous utterance of any man 'with opened eyes' to the marvels of the world around him. Their prayers for safety and health and long life and family welfare

are the expressions of what could not but be the wishes of men in the early stages of national life. The offerings of soma-juice and grain, and the occasional solemn sacrificial feast of the worshipper with his god on some sacred animal are indications that these were the right and proper ways in which they might approach the gods. There is nothing in these things that would debar progress to a moral and spiritual ideal as high as that attained from much the same beginnings by the Hebrews. If a summary of the position of those Vedic thinkers is attempted, the student will see that three very significant lines of thought find expression in the Vedas, all of them in hymns probably of the same periods. There is the belief in the righteousness of Varuna, the belief in the power of ceremonies, and the dawning acceptance of ritualism.

The study of the first of these gives ground for thinking that for a long time the Aryans were on the way to reach a high moral ideal.

Varuna was, as has already been pointed out, one of the very old gods of the Aryans, and it is Varuna who towers above all the rest in moral grandeur. 'It is possible to trace in the conception of this deity a movement of the minds of those ancient worshippers towards a theism of a wonderfully lofty character. There is much in the prayers and hymns to Varuna that brings back to one who knows it the lofty language of Hebrew seers and Psalmists. He is the great lord of the laws of nature, the upholder and controller of their order and their movement. He is especially a moral

**! Reverence for
Varuna**

sovereign, and in his presence more than in that of any other Vedic god a sense of guilt awakens in his servants' hearts. His eyes behold and see the righteous and the wicked. Varuna's ordinances are fixed and sure, so that even the immortal gods cannot oppose them. He places his fetters upon the sinner, his is the power to bind and the power also to release, and he forgives sins even unto the second generation. Perhaps the most significant fact of all in regard to this Vedic deity is the connexion of the doctrine of *rita* or the moral order with his name and authority.¹

This last point is worthy of special notice for *rita* is the highest conception of 'the whole duty of man' to be found in the Veda. It is the divine method and law, which should be paramount in the order of the universe, in the worship of the gods, and in the actions of men. It corresponds to the 'righteousness' of the Hebrews.

Two elements are essential in all religion that is to raise men. There must first be a mystic relation between the worshipper and his god, which shall enable the worshipper to feel that he can communicate with and be inspired by his god. That mysticism is present in the hymns to Varuna. 'With mine own heart I commune on the question how Varuna and I may be united' confesses the singer.² Not less important for the moral growth of a man's soul is the positive conviction of the righteousness of his god and of the need for the worshipper to practise the same righteousness. Along

¹ Dr N MACNICOL on the *Theism of the Rig veda* in the *Indian Interpreter* April, 1909

² *Rig veda* vii 86 2

understood the full significance of the situation or not. Later generations were not attracted by the severe personality and the moral uprightness of Varuna and did not return to him, and Varuna remains in later Hindu writings a dim god of seas and storms and tides.

Yet it would be a mistake to say that the other trends of thought triumphed over what was represented by the few hymns to Varuna, just as it would be a mistake to say that the monism of the Upanishads and of the Vedānta triumphed over the more ancient beliefs of the Aryans. The supreme vision of holiness was simply not attained.

It is difficult to discern how far the worship of the holy Varuna was general among the Vedic Aryans, and why it declined, but there can be no doubt as to the religious attitude of the ordinary worshipper. He requires attention because of the gift that he offers. '*Dohi me dadāmi te*, Give thou to me, I give to thee' is the formula. The gods receive strength from the offerings of the worshipper.

As rivers swell the ocean, so, hero, our prayers increase thy might

vim 87 8

In return the gods ought to render to the worshipper what he wants. One sage argues the matter with Agni without any reserve.

Son of strength, Agni, if thou were the mortal,
bright as Mitra, worshipped with our gifts,
And I were the immortal god,
I would not give thee up, Vasu, to calumny or
sinfulness, O bounteous one.

My worshipper should feel no hunger or distress
nor, O Agni, should he live in sin.

Rig veda, vim 19 25, 26.

And not only ought the gods to answer prayer out of mercy and graciousness. The idea that a sacrifice rightly performed or a hymn duly sung will compel the gods to do what the worshipper wishes becomes very pronounced. The magic power of the spell, especially the spell that will set the gods to work against the demons comes out again and again. In one of the later verses of the Rig-veda, the sage Vāmadeva is represented as being able to hire out the services of Indra for ten cows to those who will return him

2 Efficiency of
Ceremonialism

Who for ten milch-kine purchaseth from me this my Indra?

When he hath slain the Vritras let the buyer give him back to me

" *Rig-veda*, iv. 24. 10

The commentator Sāvana says that Vāmadeva had by much praise got Indra into his possession or subjugation and so was able to propose this bargain. The notion does not seem to him anything extraordinary. It is the world-wide idea of the power of the spell. And so arises the belief, fatal to morality, that any worshipper who can secure the due performance of the offerings and incantations elaborated into the ritual of the horse-sacrifice in the Yajur-veda, for example, is master of the universe of gods and men.¹

'Thus', says Macdonell, 'the statement occurs in the *White Yajur-veda* (circ 1000 B C) that the Brahman who possesses correct knowledge has the gods in his power. The Brāhmanas go a step farther in saying that there are two kinds of gods, the Devas and the Brahmanas,

¹ HAUG, *Introduction to Aitareya Brahmana*, pp. 73-4

the latter of whom are to be held as deities among men In the Brāhmanas, too, the sacrifice is represented as all-powerful, controlling not only the gods, but the very processes of nature ' ¹

Verily, there are two kinds of gods, for, indeed, the gods are the gods, and the Brahmanas who have studied and teach sacred lore are the human gods

Satapatha Brahmana, II. ii 2, 6

The charms and magic formulae in the Atharva veda are expressions of the same paralysing belief, but it is found in the period before the Atharva-veda also From the earliest days there had always been present in the mind of the Aryan a firm belief in demons, and while the high aspirations of a few singers were fixed on Varuna, the many, especially as they came in contact with the Dravidians who seemed to worship the devils that the Aryans feared, were more and more inclined to forms of faith and worship which seemed to them to guarantee, protection and welfare that they longed for while conscious of the malice and power of the demon hosts And this belief has persisted in the magic practices of the Dravidians of Malabar and in the black magic of the Tantras

If modern processes of thought held good in the minds of the ancient Aryans there must always have been men among them who did not accept the established conceptions of those around them There are Protestants in the most conservative communities and from the Purusa sūkta² it is certain that in later Vedic times there were those who had

¹ *Sanskrit Literature*, p 73

² *Rig veda*, x 90

begun to give a monistic interpretation to the universe. The idea of the ancient human sacrifice supplies the almost repellent framework and the imagery of this hymn, and the attempts to link the older mythology to the more developed ideas is awkward, but the general conception of the One that is the All is definite in the poet's mind and is forcibly put. The full import can only be grasped if it is quoted in full

1 A thousand heads had Purusa,¹ a thousand eyes,
a thousand feet

On every side pervading earth he fills a space
ten fingers wide²

2 This Purusa is all that yet hath been and all
that is to be,

The lord of immortality which waves greater
still by food

3 So mighty is his greatness, yea, greater than
this is Purusa.

All creatures are one-fourth of him, three-fourths
eternal life in heaven

4 With three-fourths Purusa went up one-fourth
of him again was here

Thence he strode out to every side over what eats
not and what eats

5 From him Virāj³ was born, again Purusa from
-Virāj was born

As soon as he was born he spread eastward and
westward o'er the earth

¹ Purusa represents Man personified and regarded as the soul and original source of the universe, the personal and life giving principle in all animated things —Griffith

² The region of the heart of man

³ Virāj is said to have come, in the form of the mundane egg from Ādi-Puruṣa, the primeval Purusa. Or Virāj may be the female counterpart of Purusa —Griffith

6 When gods prepared the sacrifice with Purusa as their offering,

Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn, summer was the wood

7 They balm¹ed (or, immolated) as victim on the grass Purusa born in earliest time

With him the deities and all Sādhyas¹ and Rishis sacrificed

8 From that great general sacrifice the dripping fat² was gathered up

He formed the creatures of the air, and animals both wild and tame

9 From that great general sacrifice Ricas and Sāma hymns were born

Therefrom the metres were produced, the Yajus had its birth from it

10 From it were horses born, from it all creatures with two rows of teeth

From it were generated kine, from it the goats and sheep were born

11 When they divided Purusa how many portions did they make?

What do they call his mouth, his arms? What do they call his thighs and feet?

12 The Brāhman was his mouth, of both his arms was the Rājanya made

His thighs became the Vaisya, from his feet the Sudra was produced

13 The Moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eye the Sun had birth,

Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and Vāyu from his breath

14 Forth from his navel came mid-air, the sky was fashioned from his head,

Earth from his feet, and from his ear the regions Thus they formed the worlds

¹ A class of celestial beings probably ancient divine sacrificers

² The mixture of curds and butter

15 Seven fencing-logs¹ had he, thrice seven layers of fuel were prepared,

When the gods, offering sacrifice, bound, as their victim Purusa

16 Gods, sacrificing, sacrificed the victim: these were the earliest holy ordinances,

The mighty ones attained the height of heaven, there were the Sādhyas, gods of old, are dwelling

The same idea appears in the remarkable hymn in which Prajāpati is declared the lord and creator of all. This hymn also must be read as a whole

1 In the beginning rose Hiraṇyagarbha,² born only lord of all created beings

He fixed and holdeth up this earth and heaven. What god shall we adore with our oblation?³

2 Giver of vital breath, of power and vigour, he whose commandments all the gods acknowledge

Whose shade is death, whose lustre makes immortal What god shall we adore with our oblation?

3 Who by his grandeur hath become sole ruler of all the moving world that breathes and slumbers,

He who is lord of men and lord of cattle. What god shall we adore with our oblation?

4 His, through his might, are these snow-covered mountains, and men call sea and Rasa⁴ his possession.

His arms are these, his thighs these heavenly regions What god shall we adore with our oblations?

¹ Pieces of wood laid round a sacrificial fire to keep it together

² The gold germ, the Sun god, as the great power of the universe

³ Also translated 'worship we Ka the god with our oblation' Ka, meaning Who? that is, the unknown god, has been applied as name to Prajāpati, and to other gods, from a forced interpretation of the interrogative pronoun which occurs in the refrain of each verse of the hymn See p 92]

⁴ The mythical river of the sky

5 By him the heavens are strong and earth is steadfast, by him light's realm and sky-vault are supported

By him the regions in mid-air were measured
What god shall we adore with our oblations ?

6 To him, supported by his help, two armies enbattled look while trembling in their spirit,

When over them the risen sun is shining
What god shall we adore with our oblation ?

7 What time the mighty waters came, containing the universal germ, producing Agni,

Thence sprang the gods' one spirit into being
What god shall we adore with our oblation ?

8 He in his might surveyed the floods containing productive force and generating Worship (or, giving birth to sacrifice)

He is the god of gods, and none beside him
What god shall we adore with our oblation ?

9 Ne'er may he harm us who is earth's begetter, nor he whose laws are sure, the heaven's creator,

He who brought forth the great and lucid waters
What god shall we adore with our oblation ?

10 Prajāpati ! thou only comprehendest all these created things, and none beside thee

Grant us our hearts' desire when we invoke thee may we have store of riches in possession

Hymn to Ka Rīgveda x 121

If this hymn is an uncertain rather than a reasoned presentation of monism, it at any rate contains foundation enough to justify later Vedantism in attempting to read its own teaching into the Vedas

From all that has been said it will be clear that the religion of the Vedas, like every other living religion, contained various and even contrary modes of thought and expression, and represented the worship of more than one type

The legacy of the
Aryan religion

of believer. And just as it is not easy to define the precise contents of these various types of faith, so it is not less difficult to state exactly what legacy the religion of the Aryans bequeathed to the later ceremonial religion that flourished in India before Buddhism arose. But the present study indicates the following as the main results which the religion of Vedic times transmitted to the succeeding ages

(i) Hinduism received from Vedic times a pantheon of gods and goddesses, of very various and sometimes of very doubtful moral character, generally benevolent, but not always so, and generally apparently regardless of the moral conduct of those who worshipped them, provided the worship was duly rendered. In this is the beginning of the vast, confused, anthropomorphic and sometimes utterly vile mythology of some of the Puranas.

(ii) Hinduism also inherited a profoundly rooted belief in demons which opened the way to the appropriation of much of the demon worship of the aboriginal races in India by the Aryans, and later on to the incorporation of some of it in recognized Hinduism, especially in Saivism

(iii) The doctrine of the power of the rightly performed sacrifice and the rightly sung hymn to produce and direct and control the might of the gods, as found in the Vedas, contains the beginnings of a sacerdotalism that grew in proportion as the Brahmans became a distinct priestly class among their fellow Aryans. In its extreme forms it is a doctrine which sanctions all manner of magic, and as it makes the rite supreme it is fatal to morality. Tantric Hinduism is directly derives its power from this doctrine.

(iv) The inclusion in the Veda of the *Purusa sūktā* which expressly states that the Priest, the Warrior, the Merchant and the Serf were the four orders or *varṇas* created by divine power is a sign that along with the rise of the Brahmin priesthood there was also arising a distinction of classes in the population which later on became the caste system of Hinduism.

(v) There was also in that *Purusa sūktā* and in certain other hymns evidence of the beginning of the Intermonistic Vedantism.

(vi) Beyond all else in real religious value the Aryans handed on to their descendants the thought that the worshipper and his god might be friends and that the worshipper might love and trust his god. The numbing fatalism of the doctrine of rebirths (*saṃ sārā*) is absent from the Vedas. The Aryan worshipped without images and his house was his temple. In his ignorance he often worshipped wrongly, and men cannot begin again to worship his gods or offer his prayers and sacrifices. But though the gods and the worship of the ancient Aryan are faded names and forgotten rites, he had the spirit of devotion. Later Hinduism especially philosophic Hinduism has again and again made light of this truth. The 'Way of Wisdom' (*Jñāna mārga*) has been exalted above the 'Way of Devotion' or 'Way of Love' (*bhakti mārga*). But it is along the 'Way of Love' that those who have come nearest to God have walked in India as in all the world, and that 'Way of Love' had its beginnings in the devotion of the Vedic sage to *Varuṇa* or *Agni*.

Tulsi Dās and Tukā Rāmā Paddanattu Pillai and Mānikka Vāsakar all walked in that 'Way of Love'.

and it has brought millions to the feet of Rama and Krishna and Siva and the Buddha

India is more conscious of the open 'Way of Love' to day than her Aryan ancestors were and more anxious to enter it Dyaus and Varuna have been loved and have passed away Krishna and Rama and Siva Nadarāja won the strong devotion of succeeding generations Like their ancestors the simpler villagers and the unlearned still delight in the stories of the heroic deeds or 'holy sport' of the gods of the epics and the Puranas But the more deeply devout of their worshippers to-day are striving to love a Krishna or a Siva allegorized and transformed by an awakened moral sense The attempt is being repeatedly made to find Christ in Krishna Such efforts must fail But they show a true instinct And it cannot but be that as the years roll on India will find that she best comes to knowledge of the All-Father in the divine and holy graciousness of the eternal personality of Jesus of Galilee, and that without hesitation or misgiving or thought of other hostile powers, whether Devas or demons, she can set the loving devotion of her longing heart on Him and find content

READINGS

FROM THE

VEDA

These readings are arranged according to the deities to which they are addressed, or the special subjects to which they refer. A few explanations of proper names and allusions are given in footnotes.

The translations used are those by the late R. T. H. Griffith, published by Messrs. Lazarus & Co., Benares, but the transliteration of the proper names is that followed in the earlier parts of this book.

THE RIG-VEDA

Book 11 Hymn 27 THE ĀDITYAS

1 These hymns that drop down fatness, with the
ladle I ever offer to the kings Ādityas

May Mitra, Aryaman and Bhaga hear us, the
mighty Varuna, Daksha and Anśa

2 With one accord may Aryaman and Mitra and
Varuna this day accept this praise-song—

Ādityas bright and pure as streams of water,
free from all guile and falsehood, blameless, perfect

3. These gods, Ādityas, vast profound and faith-
ful, with many eyes, fain to deceive the wicked,

Looking within behold the good and the evil.
near to the kings is even the thing most distant

4 Upholding that which moves and that which
moves not, Ādityas, gods, protectors of all being,

Provident, guarding well the world of spirits,
true to eternal law, the debt-exactors

5. May I, Ādityas, share in this your favour which
Aryaman, brings profit e'en in danger

Under your guidance, Varuna and Mitra, round
troubles may I pass, like rugged places

6 Smooth is your path, O Aryaman and Mitra,
excellent is it Varuna, and thornless

Thereon, Ādityas, send us down your blessing
grant us a shelter hard to be demolished

7 Mother of kings, may Aditi transport us, by fair
paths, Aryaman, beyond all hatred

May we uninjured, girt by many heroes, win
Varuna's and Mitra's high protection

8 With their support they stay three earths, three heavens, three are their functions in the gods' assembly

Mighty through Law, Ādityas, is your greatness, fair is it, Aryaman, Varuṇa and Mītra

9 Golden and splendid, pure like streams of water, they hold aloft the three bright heavenly regions

Ne'er do they slumber, never close their eyelids, faithful, far-ruling for the righteous mortal

10 Thou over all, O Varuṇa, art sovran, be they gods, Asura, or be they mortals

Grant unto us to see an hundred autumns ours be the happy lives of our forefathers

11 Neither the right nor left do I distinguish, neither the east nor yet the west, Ādityas

Simple and guided by your wisdom, Vasus, may I attain the light that brings no danger

12 He who bears gifts unto the kings, true leaders, he whom their everlasting blessings prosper,

Moves with his chariot first in rank and wealthy, munificent and lauded in assemblies

13 Pure, faithful, very strong, with heroes round him, he dwells beside the waters rich with pasture

None slays from near at hand or from a distance him who is under the Ādityas guidance

14 Aditi, Mītra, Varuṇa, forgive us however we have erred and sinned against you

May I obtain the broad light free from peril O Indra, let not during darkness seize us

15 For him the twain (i.e. heaven and earth) united pour their fulness, the rain from heaven he thrives most highly favoured

He goes to war mastering both the mansions to him both portions of the world are gracious

16 Your guiles, ye holy ones, to quell oppressors, your spread out against the foe, Ādityas,

May I car-borne pass like a skilful horseman uninjured may I dwell in spacious shelter

17 May I not live, O Varuna, to witness my
wealthy, liberal, dear friend's destitution
King, may I never lack well-ordered riches.
Loud may we speak, with heroes, in assembly.

Book 1 Hymn 1 AGNI

1. I laud Agni, the great high priest, god, minister
of sacrifice,

The herald, lavishest of wealth.

2 Worthy is Agni to be praised by living as by
ancient seers

He shall bring hitherward the gods

3. Through Agni man obtaineth wealth, yea, plenty
waxing day by day,

Most rich in heroes, glorious

4 Agni, the flawless sacrifice, which thou encom-
passest about

Verily goeth to the gods

5 May Agni, sapient-minded priest, truthful, most
gloriously great,

The god, come hither with the gods

6. Whatever blessing, Agni, thou wilt grant unto
thy worshipper,

That, Angiras,¹ is thy true gift.

7 To thee, dispeller of the night, O Agni, day by
day with prayer,

Bringing thee reverence, we come,

8 Ruler of sacrifices, guard of Law (*rita*) eternal,
radiant one,

Increasing in thine own abode

9 Be to us easy of approach, even as a father to
his son

Agni, be with us for our weal

¹ A name of Agni

Book 1 Hymn 26 AGNI, THE PRIEST
AMONG THE GODS

[Fire is one of the early Aryan gods When it become customary to offer sacrifice to the gods by fire, the fire god was recognized by the Indo Aryans as the messenger of the sacrifice, the great Priest]

1 O worthy of oblation, Lord of prospering powers, assume thy robes,

And offer this our sacrifice

2 Sit, ever to be chosen, as our Priest, most youthful, through our hymns,

O Agni, through our heavenly word

3 For here a father for his son, kinsman for kinsman worshippeth,

And friend, choice-worthy, for his friend

4 Here let the foe destroyers sit, Varuna, Mitra, Aryaman,

Like men, upon our sacred grass

5 O ancient Herald, be thou glad in this our rite and fellowship,

Hearken thou well to these our songs

6 Whate'er in this perpetual course we sacrifice to god and god,

That gift is offered up in thee.

7 May he be our dear household Lord, Priest, pleasant and choice worthy, may

We, with bright fires, be dear to him

8 The gods, adored with brilliant fires, have granted precious wealth to us,

So, with bright fires, we pray to thee

9 And, O Immortal One, so may the eulogies of mortal men

Belong to us and thee alike

10 With all thy fires, O Agni, find pleasure in this our sacrifice,

And this our speech, O son of strength

Book 11 Hymn 12 AGNI

[This is one of the few hymns addressed to Agni in which sin is prominently mentioned. But the invariable reference to wealth is also introduced.]

1 Whoso enkindles thee, with lifted ladle, and thrice this day offers thee food, O Agni,

May he excel, triumphant, through thy splendours, wise through thy mental power, O Jātavedas¹

2 Whoso, with toil and trouble, brings thee fuel, serving the majesty of mighty Agni,

He kindling thee at evening and at morning, prospers, and comes to wealth, and slays his foemen

3 Agni is master of sublime dominion, Agni is lord of strength and lofty riches

Straightway the self-reliant, god, most youthful, gives treasures to the mortal who adores him

4 Most youthful god, whatever sin, through folly, here in the world of men we have committed,

Before great Aditi make thou us sinless remit entirely, Agni, our offences

5 Even in the presence of great sin, O Agni, free us from prison of the gods or mortals

Never may we who are thy friends be injured grant health and wealth unto our seed and offspring

6 Even as ye here, gods excellent and holy, have loosed the cow that by the foot was tethered,²

So also set us free from this affliction long let our life, O Agni, be extended

Book 1 Hymn 26 AGNI

[Agni is specially addressed as the inviter of the gods to sacrifices.]

1 O Agni, holy and divine, with splendour and thy pleasant tongue

Bring hither and adore the gods

¹ Agni as knowing and possessing all creation

² The cow-buffalo tied to a post during the sacrifice, symbolic of man bound by sin

- 2 We pray thee, thou who droppest oil, bright-
rayed! who lookest on the Sun,
Bring the gods hither to the feast
- 3 We have enkindled thee, O sage, bright caller
of the gods to feast,
O Agni, great in sacrifice
- 4 O Agni, come with all the gods, come to our
sacrificial gift
We choose thee as invoking priest
- 5 Bring, Agni, to the worshipper who pours the
juice heroic strength
Sit with the gods upon the grass
- 6 Victor of thousands, Agni, thou, enkindled,
cherishest the laws,
Laud-worthy, envoy of the gods
- 7 Sit Agni Jātavedas down, the bearer of our
sacred gifts,
Most youthful, god and minister
- 8 Duly proceed our sacrifice, comprising all the
gods, to day
Strew holy grass to be their seat
- 9 So may the Maruts sit theron, the Aśvins,
Mitra, Varuna
The gods with all their company

Book \ Hymn 39 AŚVINS

[The author of this hymn is Ghoshā, daughter of Kakshivān. Being a leper she was incapable of marriage. When she was grown old in her father's house the Aśvins gave her health, youth and beauty so that she obtained a husband. Only the opening verses are quoted.]

- 1 As 'twere the name of father, easy to invoke,
we all assembled here invoke this car of yours,
Aśvins, your swiftly-rolling circumambient car
which he who worships must invoke at eve and dawn
- 2 Awake all present strains, and let the hymns
flow forth raise up abundant fulness this is our
desire

Ásvins, bestow on us a glorious heritage and
give our princes treasure fair as Soma is

3 Ye are the bliss of he who groweth old at home,
and helpers of the slow although he linger last

Man call you too, Nāsatyas,¹ healers of the
blind, the thin and feeble, and the man with broken
bones

4 Ye made Chyavāna, weak and worn with length
of days, young again, like a car, that he had power to
move

Ye lifted up the son of Tugra from the floods.
At our libations must all these your acts be praised.

5 We will declare among the folk your ancient
deeds heroic, yea ye were physicians bringing health

You, you who must be lauded, will we bring for
aid, so that this foe of ours, O Ásvins, may believe

6 Listen to me, O Ásvins, I have cried to you
Give me your aid as sire and mother help their son

Poor, without kin or friend or ties of blood
am I Save me, before it be too late, from this my
curse (i.e. my leprosy)

Book vii. Hymn 53 DY AUS AND PRITHIVI

1 As priest with solemn rites and adorations I
worship Heaven and Earth, the high and holy

To them, great parents of the gods, have sages
of ancient time, singing, assigned precedence

2 With newest hymns set in the seat of Order
those the two parents, born before all others,

Come, Heaven and Earth, with the celestial
people, hither to us, for strong is your protection

3 Yea, Heaven and Earth, ye hold in your pos-
session full many a treasure for the liberal giver

Grant us the wealth which comes in free
abundance Preserve us evermore, ye gods, with
blessings

¹ The Truthful

Book 1 Hymn 103 INDRA

1 That highest Indra-power of thine is distant,
that which is here sages possessed aforetime

This one is on the earth, in haven the other,
and both unite as flag and flag in battle

2 He spread the wide earth out and firmly fixed
it, smote with his thunderbolt and loosed the waters

Maghavan with his puissance struck down Ahi¹,
rent Rauhina² to death, and slaughtered Vyansa

3 Armed with his bolt and trusting in this prowess
he wandered shattering the Dāsas' cities³

Cast thy dart, knowing, thunderer, at the Dasyu,
increase the Ārya's might and glory, Indra

4 For him who thus hath taught these human
races, Maghavan, bearing a fame worthy title,

Thunderer, drawing nigh to slay the Dasyus,
hath given himself the name of son for glory

5 See this abundant wealth that he possesses,
and put your trust in Indra's hero vigour

He found the cattle, and he found the horses,
he found the plants, the forests, and the waters

6 To him the truly strong, whose deeds are many,
to him the strong bull let us pour the soma

The hero watching like a thief in ambush goes
parting the possessions of the godless

7 Well didst thou do that hero deed, O Indra, in
waking with thy bolt the slumbering Ahi

In thee, delighted dames divine rejoiced them,
the flying Maruts and all gods were joyful

8 As thou hast smitten Susna, Pipru, Vṛitra and
Kuyava, and Śambara's⁴ forts, O Indra

This prayer of ours may Varuna grant, and
Mitra, and Aditi and Sindhu, Earth and Heaven

¹ Ahi is a serpent demon or another name for Vṛitra

² Said to be a demon of drought a dark cloud that withholds the rain

³ The forts of the Dasyus the aborigines

⁴ Demons of drought

Book 1 Hymn 175. INDRA

[The following hymn to Indra, asking him to destroy the Dasyus, the aborigines, and give food and a camp with running water, bears internal evidence that it was composed at a time when the Aryans were invading India]

1 Glad thee thy glory hath been quaffed, lord of bay steeds, as 'twere the bowl's enlivening mead.

For thee the strong there is strong drink, mighty, with countless powers to win

2 Let our strong drink, most excellent, exhilarating, come to thee,

Victorious, Indra ! bringing gain, immortal, conquering in fight

3 Thou, hero, winner of the spoil, urgest to speed the car of man

Burn, like a vessel with the flame, the lawless Dasyu, conqueror ¹

4 Empowered by thine own might, O sage, thou stolest Sūrya's chariot wheel

Thou bearest Kutsa with the steeds of Wind to Śusna as his death ¹

5. Most mighty is thy rapturous joy, most splendid is thine active power,

Wherewith, foe-slaying, sending bliss, thou art supreme in gaining steeds

6 As thou, O Indra, to the ancient singers wast ever joy, as water to the thirsty,

So unto thee I sing this invocation May we find food, a camp with running water

¹ Indra is said to have taken the wheel of Sūrya's chariot to throw against the demon of drought Kutsa was a sage defended by Indra against Śusna, a demon of drought

Book II Hymn 42 INDRA IN THE FORM
OF A KAPINJALA¹

1 Telling his race aloud with cries repeated, he
(Kapinjala) sends his voice out as his boat a steerman

O bird, be ominous of happy fortune from no
side may calamity befall thee

2 Let not the falcon kill thee, nor the eagle, let
not the arrow-bearing archer reach thee

Still crying in the region of the Fathers,² speak
here auspicious, bearing joyful tidings

3 Bringing good tidings, bird of happy omen, call
thou out loudly southward of our dwellings,³

So that no thief, no sinner may oppress us
Loud may we speak, with heroes, in assembly

Book III Hymn 48 INDRA

1 Soon as the young Bull (Indra) sprang into
existence he longed to taste the pressed out soma's
liquor

Drink thou thy fill, according to thy longing,
first, of the noble mixture blent with soma

2 That day when thou wast born thou, fain to
taste it, drankst the plant's milk which the mountains
nourish

That milk thy mother⁴ first, the dame who bare
thee poured for thee in thy mighty father's dwelling

3 Desiring food he came unto his mother, and on
her breast beheld the pungent soma

Wise, he moved on, keeping aloof the others,
and wrought great exploits in his varied aspects

¹ The bird called the francoline partridge

² The region where the spirits of departed ancestors dwell

³ The Fathers dwell towards the south The cry of birds from
that quarter was a good omen

⁴ Aditi

4. Fierce, quickly conquering, of surpassing vigour, he framed his body even as he listed

E'en from his birth-time Indra conquered Tvaṣṭri, bore off the soma and in beakers drank it

5. Call we on Maghavan (i.e. the liberal one), auspicious Indra, best hero in the fight where spoil is gathered,

The strong, who listens, who gives aid in battles, who slays the Vṛitras, wins and gathers riches

Book III Hymn 62. INDRA AND OTHERS

[The tenth verse of this hymn is the Gāyatrī or Sāvitrī]

1 Your well-known prompt activities aforetime needed no impulse from your faithful servant

Where, Indra, Varuna, is now that glory where-with ye brought support to those who loved you?

2 This man, most diligent, seeking after riches, incessantly invokes you for your favour.

Accordant, Indra Varuna, with the Maruts, with Heaven and Earth, hear ye mine invocation

3 O Indra, Varuna, ours be this treasure, ours be wealth, Maruts, with full store of heroes

May the Varūtris¹ with their shelter aid us, and Bhārati² and Hotrā with the mornings

4 Be pleased with our oblations thou loved of all gods, Bṛhaspati³

Give wealth to him who brings thee gifts

5 At sacrifices, with your hymns worship the pure Bṛhaspati—

I pray for power which none may bend—

6 The Bull of men, whom none deceive, the wearer of each shape at will,

Bṛhaspati most excellent

¹ Varūtris, guardian goddesses or wives of the gods

² Bhārati and Hōtrā were goddesses presiding over worship

³ Lord of Prayer

7 Divine, resplendent Pūshan, this our newest
hymn of eulogy

By us is chanted forth to thee

8 Accept with favour this my song, be gracious
to the earnest thought,

Even as a bridegroom to his bride

9 May he who sees all living thing, sees them to-
gether at a glance,—

May he, may Pūshan be our help

10 May we attain that excellent glory of Savitar
the god

So may he stimulate our prayers ¹

11 With understanding, earnestly, of Savitar the
god we crave,

Our portion of prosperity

12 Men, singers worship Savitar the god with
hymn and holy rites,

Urged by the impulse of their thoughts

13 Soma who gives success goes forth, goes to the
gathering-place of gods

To seat him at the seat of Law

14 To us and to our cattle may Soma give salutary
food,

To biped and to quadruped

15 May Soma, strengthening our power of life,
and conquering our foes,

In our assembly take his seat

16 May Mitra, Varuna, sapient pair, bedew our
pasturage with oil,

With meath the regions of the air

17 Far ruling jovful when adored, ye reign through
majesty of might,

With pure laws everlastingly

18 Lauded by Jamadagni's ² song sit in the place
of holy Law ³

Drink Soma, ye who strengthen Law

¹ Tat savitur varenyam bhargo devasva dhīmahī
Dhiyo yo nah prachodavāt

² The kindler of the Fire

³ The place ordained for sacrifice

Book V Hymn 57 THE MARUTS

1 Of one accord, with Indra, O ye Rudras, come borne on your golden car for our prosperity.

An offering from us, this hymn is brought to you, as, unto one who thirsts for water, heavenly springs

2 Armed with your daggers, full of wisdom, armed with spears, armed with your quivers, armed with arrows, with good bows,

Good horses and good cars have ye, O Pṛisni's sons ye, Maruts, with good weapons go to victory

3. From hills and heaven ye shake wealth for the worshipper in terror at your coming low the woods bow down

Ye make the earth to tremble, sons of Pṛisni, when for victory ye have yoked, fierce ones! your spotted deer,

4. Impetuous as the wind, wrapped in their robes of rain, like twins of noble aspect and of lovely form,

The Maruts, spotless, with steeds tawny hued and red, strong in their mightiness and spreading wide like heaven

5. Rich in adornment, rich in drops, munificent, bright in their aspect, yielding bounties that endure

Noble by birth, adorned with gold upon their breasts, the singers of the sky have won immortal fame.

6 Borne on both shoulders, O ye Maruts, are your spears within your arms is laid your energy and strength

Your manliness on your heads, your weapons in your cars, all glorious majesty is moulded on your forms

7 Vouchsafe to us, O Maruts, splendid bounty in cattle and in steeds, in cars and heroes

Children of Rudra, give us high distinction - may I enjoy your godlike help and favour,

8 Ho! Maruts, heroes, skilled in Law, immortal,
 be gracious unto us, ye rich in treasures,
 Ye hearers of the truth, ye sage and youthful,
 mightily waving with loud-resonant voices

Book 1 Hymn 83 PARJANYA

1 Sing with these songs thy welcome to the
 mighty, with adoration praise and call Parjanya
 The Bull, loud roaring, swift to send his bounty,
 lays in the plants the seed for germination

2 He smites the trees apart, he slays the demons
 all life fears him who wields the mighty weapon
 From him exceeding strong flees e'en the guilt-
 less when thundering Parjanya smites the wicked

3 Like a car driver whipping on his horses, he
 makes the messengers of rain spring forward
 Far off resounds the roaring of the lion what
 time Parjanya fills the sky with rain cloud

4 ¹ Forth burst the winds, down come the lightning-
 flashes, the plants shoot up, the realm of light is
 streaming

Food springs abundant for all living creatures
 what time Parjanya quickens earth with moisture

5 Thou at whose bidding earth bows low before
 thee, at whose command hoofed cattle fly in terror,

At whose behest the plants assume all colours,
 even thou Parjanya, yield us great protection

6 Send down for us the rain of heaven, ye
 Maruts, and let the stallion's streams descend in
 torrents

Come hither with this thunder while thou
 pourest the waters down, our heavenly lord and father

7 Thunder and roar the germ of life deposit.
 Fly round us on thy chariot water laden

Thine opened water skin draw with thee down
 ward, and let the hollows and the heights be level.

8 Lift up the mighty vessel, pour down water,
and let the liberated streams rush forward
Saturate both the earth and heaven with fatness,
and for the cows let there be drink abundant
9 When thou, with thunder and with roar, Par-
janya, smitest sinners down,
This universe evulsts thereat, yea, all that is
upon the earth
10 Thou hast poured down the rain-flood now
withhold it Thou hast made desert places fit for
travel Thou hast made herbs to grow for our enjoy-
ment yea, thou hast won thee praise from living
creatures

Book 1 Hymn 42 PUSHAN

1 Shorten our ways, O Pūshan, move aside
obstruction in the path
2 Go close before us, cloudborn god
Drive, Pūshan, from our road the wolf, the
wicked inauspicious wolf,¹
3 Who lies in wait to injure us
Who lurks about the path we take, the robber
with a guileful heart
4 Far from the road chase him away
Tread with thy foot and trample out the fire-
brand of the wicked one,
5 The double-tongued, whose'er he be
Wise Pūshan, wonder worker, we claim of thee
now the aid wherewith
6 Thou furtheredst our sires of old
So, lord of all prosperity, best wielder of the
golden sword,
Make riches easy to be won

¹ The word signifies also a wicked, godless man

7 Past all pursuers lead us, make pleasant our path and fair to tread

O Pūshan, find thou power for this

8 Lead us to meadows rich in grass send on our way no early heat

O Pūshan, find thou power for this,

9 Be gracious to us, fill us full, give, feed us, and invigorate

O Pūshan, find thou power for this

10 No blame have we for Pūshan, him we magnify with songs of praise

We seek the mighty one for wealth

Book 1 Hymn 20 RIBHUS

1 For the celestial race this song of praise which gives wealth lavishly

Was made by singers with their lips

2 They who for Indra, with their mind, formed horses harnessed by a word,

Attained by works to sacrifice

3 They for the two Nāsatyas¹ wrought a light car moving every way

They formed a nectar-yielding cow

4 The Ribhus with effectual prayers, honest, with constant labour made

Their sire and mother young again

5 Together came your gladdening drops with Indra by the Maruts girt,

With the Ādityas, with the kings

6 The sacrificial ladle, wrought newly by the god Tvāshṭar's hand—

Four ladles have ye made thereof

7 Vouchsafe us wealth, to him who pours thrice seven libations, vea, to each

Give wealth, pleased with our eulogies

¹ The Āśvins, the truthful ones

8. As ministering priests they held, by pious acts
they won themselves,
A share in sacrifice with gods

Book vii Hymn 46 RUDRA

1 To Rudra bring these songs, whose bow is firm
and strong, the god of heavenly nature, with swift-
flying shafts

Disposer, conqueror whom none may overcome,
armed with sharp-pointed weapons may he hear our
call

2 He through his lordship thinks on beings of the
earth on heavenly beings through his high imperial
sway

Come willingly to our doors that gladly welcome
thee and heal all sickness, Rudra, in our families

3 May thy bright arrow which, shot down by
thee from heaven, flieth upon the earth, pass us
uninjured by

Thou, very gracious god, hast thousand medi-
cines inflict no evil on our sons or progeny

4 Slay us not, nor abandon us, O Rudra let not
thy noose, when thou art angry, seize us

Give us trimmed grass¹ and rule over the living
Preserve us evermore, ye gods, with blessings

Book vii Hymn 45. SAVITAR

1 May the god Savitar, rich in goodly treasures,
filling the region, borne by steeds come hither,

In his hand holding much that makes people
happy, lulling to slumber and arousing creatures.

¹ Sacred grass placed at the sacrifice for the gods to rest on
The petition means 'Permit us to continue to sacrifice,' i.e. Let
us remain alive

2 Golden, sublime, and easy in their motion, his arms extend unto the bounds of heaven

Now shall that mightiness of his be lauded even Sūra¹ yields to him in active vigour

3 May this god Savitar, the strong and mighty, the lord of precious wealth, vouchsafe us treasures

May he, advancing his far-spreading lustre, bestow on us the food that feedeth mortals

4 These songs praise Savitar whose tongue is pleasant, praise him whose arms are full, whose hands are lovely

High vital strength, and manifold, may ye grant us Preserve us evermore, ye gods, with blessings

Book 1x Hymn 1 SOMA PAVAMANA²

1 In sweetest and most gladdening stream flow pure, O Soma, on thy way,

Pressed out for Indra, for his drink

2 Fiend queller, friend of all men, he hath with the plank³ attained unto

His place, his iron fashioned home

3 Be thou best Vritra-slaver, best granter of bliss, most liberal

Promote our wealthy princes' gifts

4 Flow onward with thy juice unto the banquet of the mighty gods

Flow hither for our strength and fame

¹ A different form of the Sun-god Sāvana says that Savitar is the sun before it rises

² The attributes of Agni are transferred to Soma. He is addressed as Pavamāna, representing the juice as it flows through the wool which is used as a strainer and thus undergoing purification. The hymns were intended to be sung while this process was going on

³ Used in pressing soma juice from the soma-plant

- 5 O Indu,¹ we draw nigh to thee, with this one
 object day by day
 To thee alone our prayers are said
 6 The daughter of the Sun² by means of this eter-
 nal fleece makes pure
 Thy Soma that is gushing forth,
 7 Ten sister maids³ of slender form seize him
 amid the press and hold
 Him firmly on the final day
 8 The virgins⁴ send him forth they blow the
 musician-like, and fuse
 The triple foe-repelling meath
 9 The inviolable milch kine round about him
 blend, for Indra's drink,
 The fresh young Soma with their milk
 10 In the wild raptures of this draught, Indra
 slays all the Vṛitras he,
 The hero pours his wealth on us

Book 18 Hymn 112 SOMA PAVAMANA

[This hymn appears to be an old popular song transformed into
 an address to Soma The reference to the Brahman in the first
 verse proves that the priesthood already formed a profession when
 this hymn was finally composed]

- 1 We all have various thoughts and plans, and
 diverse are the ways of men
 The priest (Brahman) seeks one who pours the
 juice,⁶ wright⁷ seeks the cracked, and leech the maim-
 ed Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's sake
 2 The smith with ripe and seasoned plants,⁸ with
 feathers of the birds of air,

¹ Soma falling from the strainer in drops

² Śraddhā or Faith personified

³ The priest's fingers

⁴ The fingers,

⁵ Some sort of bag-pipe

⁶ Who offers libations,

⁷ Carpenter

⁸ Reeds to be made into arrows

With stones and with enkindled flames, seeks
him who hath a store of gold Flow, Indu, flow for
Indra's sake

3 A bard am I, my dad's¹ a leech, mammy²
lays corn upon the stones

Striving for wealth, with varied plans, we follow
our desires like kine Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's
sake

4 The horse would draw an easy car, gay hosts
attract the laugh and jest

The male desires his mate's approach, the frog
is eager for the flood Flow, Indu, flow for Indra's
sake

Book 1 Hymn 115 SŪRYA

1 The brilliant presence of the gods hath risen,
the eye of Mitra, Varuna, and Agni

The soul of all that moveth not or moveth, the
Sun hath filled the air and earth and heaven

2 Like as a young man followeth a maiden, so
doth the Sun the Dawn, refulgent goddess

When pious men extend their generations, be
fore the auspicious one for happy fortune

3 Auspicious are the Sun's bay coloured horses,
bright, changing hues, meet for our shouts of triumph

Bearing our prayers, the sky's ridge have they
mounted, and in a moment speed round earth and
heaven

4 This is the godhead, this the might of Sūrya,
he hath withdrawn what spread o'er work unfinished

When he hath loosed his horses from their
station, straight over all Night spreadeth out her
garment

5 In the sky's lap the Sun this form assumeth for
Mitra and for Varuna to look on

¹ Dad *tatah* originally a child's word

² Mammy *nandā*

His bay steeds well maintain his power eternal,
at one time bright and darksome at another

6 This day, O gods, while Sūrya is ascending,
deliver us from trouble and dishonour

This prayer of ours may Varuna grant, and
Mitra, and Aditi and Sindhu, Earth and Heaven

Book II Hymn 28 VARUNA

1 This laud of the self-radiant wise Āditya shall
be supreme o'er all that is in greatness

I beg renown of Varuna the mighty, the god
exceeding kind to him who worships

2 Having extolled thee, Varuna, with thoughtful
care may we have high fortune in thy service,

Singing thy praises like the fires at coming, day
after day, of mornings rich in cattle

3 May we be in thy keeping, O thou leader, wide-
ruling Varuna, lord of many heroes

O sons of Aditi, for ever faithful, pardon us,
gods, admit us to your friendship

4 He made them flow, the Āditya, the sustainer
the rivers run by Varuna's commandment

These feel no weariness, nor cease from flowing
swift have they flown like birds in air around us

5 Loose me from sin as from a bond that binds
me may we swell, Varuna, thy spring of Order

Let not my thread, while I weave song, be
severed, nor my work's sum, before the time, be
shattered

6 Far from me, Varuna, remove all danger accept
me graciously, thou holy sovran

Cast off, like cords that hold a calf, my troubles
I am not even mine eyelid's lord without thee

7 Strike us not, Varuna with those dread weapons
which, Asura, at thy bidding wound the sinner

Let us not pass away from light to exile
Scatter, that we may live, the men who hate us

8 O mighty Varuna, now and hereafter, even as of old, will we speak forth our worship

For in thyself, infallible god, thy statutes ne'er to be moved are fixed as on a mountain

9 Wipe out what debts I have myself contracted, let me not profit, king, by gain of others

Full many a morn remains to dawn upon us in these, O Varuna, while we live direct us

10 O king, whoever, be he friend or kinsman, hath threatened me affrighted in my slumber—

If any wolf or robber fain would harm us, therefrom, O Varuna, give thou us protection

11 May I not live O Varuna, to witness my wealthy liberal, dear friend's destitution

King, may I never lack well ordered riches
Loud may we speak, with heroes, in assembly

Book v Hymn 85 VARUNA

1 Sing forth a hymn sublime and solemn, grateful to glorious Varuna, imperial ruler,

Who hath struck out, like one who slays the victim, earth as a skin to spread in front of Sūrva

2 In the tree-tops the air he hath extended, put milk in kine and vigorous speed in horses,

Set intellect in hearts, fire in the waters, Sūrva in heaven, and Soma on the mountain

3 Varuna lets the big cask, opening downward, flow through the heaven and earth and air's mid-region

Therewith the universe's sovran waters earth as the shower of rain bedews the barley

4 When Varuna is fain for milk he moistens the sky, the land, and earth to her foundation

Then straight the mountains clothe them in the rain cloud the heroes (i.e. the Maruts), putting forth their vigour, loose them

5 I will declare this mighty deed of magic, of glorious Varuṇa the lord immortal,

Who standing in the firmament hath meted the earth out with the sun as with a measure

6 None, verily, hath ever let or hindered this the most wise god's mighty deed of magic,¹

Whereby, with all their flood, the lucid rivers fill not one sea wherein they pour their water

7 If we have sinned against the man who loves us, have ever wronged a brother, friend, or comrade,

The neighbour ever with us, or a stranger, O Varuna, remove from us the trespass

8 If we, as gamesters cheat at play, have cheated, done wrong unwittingly or sinned of purpose,

Cast all these sins away like loosened fetters, and Varuna, let us be thine own beloved

Book x. Hymn 124 THE PASSING OF VARUNA

[This hymn is remarkable as indicating the passing of Varuna out of the popular religion and the exaltation of Indra]

Indra speaks

1. Come to this sacrifice of ours, O Agni, three-fold² with seven threads³ and five divisions⁴

Be our oblation-bearer and preceder thou hast lain long enough in during darkness

*Agni speaks*⁵

2 I come a god foreseeing from the godless⁶ to immortality by secret pathways,

¹ *Māyām*, magic or device or design

² The three daily oblations *pūkayajna*, *hāvīryajna* *soma yajna*

³ Conducted by the seven priests

⁴ Perhaps with five oblations Meaning uncertain

⁵ Agni has left Varuna, who was being forgotten, and seeks Indra

⁶ Varuna is called 'godless' because as he ceased to be worshipped the sacrificial fire, *agni*, was not kindled in his honour

While I, ungracious one, desert the gracious,
leave mine own friends and seek the kin of strangers ¹

3 I, looking to the guest of other lineage, ² have
founded many a rule of Law and Order

I bid farewell to the great god, the Father, ³
and, for neglect, obtain my share of worship

4 I tarried many a year within this altar ⁴ I
leave the Father, for my choice is Indra

Away pass Agni, Varuna, and Soma King-
ship alternates this ⁵ I come to favour

Indra speaks

5 These Asuras ⁵ have lost their powers of magic.
But thou, O Varuna, if thou dost love me,

O king, discerning truth and right from false-
hood, come and be lord and ruler of my kingdom ⁷

6 Here is the light of heaven, here all is lovely
here there is radiance, here is air's wide region

Let us two slaughter Vritra Forth, O Soma,
Thou art oblation we therewith will serve thee

7 The sage ⁸ hath fixed his form by wisdom in
the heavens Varuna with no violence let the waters
flow

Like woman-folk, the floods that bring pros-
perity, have caught his hue and colour as they
gleamed and shone

8 These wait upon his ⁹ loftiest power and
vigour he dwells in these who triumph in their
godhead,

And they, like people who elect their ruler, have
in abhorrence turned away from Vritra

¹ Go forth in sacrificial fire to Indra instead of to Varuna

² Ordinary fire ³ The Father is Varuna ⁴ Varuna's altar

⁵ The supremacy of Indra is denoted by this

⁶ The Asuras immortals like Agni Varuna and Soma

⁷ Indra offers Varuna supremacy in his own heaven now that
he has lost his general supremacy

⁸ Soma or Mitra

⁹ Indra's

9 They call him swan,¹ the abhorrent flood's companion, moving in friendship with celestial waters

The poets in their thought have looked on Indra swiftly approaching when the Anuṣṭup² calls him

Book I Hymn 86 VARUNA

Book I Hymn 25, one of the hymns to Varuna attributed to Śunahsapha has already been quoted in the section on Human Sacrifice See page 129.

Book VII Hymn 86 VARUNA

Book VII Hymn 86, a hymn to Varuna has already been quoted in the section on the Prayers of the Aṅyans See page 150

Book I Hymn 2 VĀYU

1 Beautiful Vāyu come, for thee these soma-drops have been prepared

Drink of them, hearken to our call

2 Knowing the days, with soma-juice poured forth, the singers call to thee,

O Vāyu with their hymns of praise

3 Vāyu, thy penetrating voice goes forth unto the worshipper,

Far-spreading for the soma draught

4 Here, Indra Vāyu, is the juice, come for our offered dainties' sake

The drops are yearning for you both

¹ Sūrya the Sun-god is sometimes so called

² Either the hymn in the Anuṣṭup metre or dancing to the time of the Anuṣṭup metre Metre and musical time are intimately connected with dancing

5 Vāyu and Indra, well ye know libations, rich in sacred rites ¹

So come ye hither rapidly

6 Vāyu and Indra, come to what the soma-presser hath prepared

Soon, heroes, even with resolve

7 Mitra, of holy strength, I call, and foe destroying Varuna,

Who make the oil-fed rite complete

8 Mitra and Varuna, through Law, (*rita*) lovers and cherishers of Law,

Have ye obtained your mighty power

9 Our sages, Mitra-Varuna, of wide dominion, strong by birth,

Vouchsafe us strength that worketh well

Book 1 Hymn 156 VISHNU

1 For shining, widely famed, going thy wonted way, fed with the oil, be helpful, Mitra-like, to us

So, Vishnu, e'en the wise must swell thy song of praise, and he who hath oblations pay thee solemn rites

2 He who brings gifts to him the ancient and the last, to Vishnu who ordains, together with his spouse,

Who tells the lofty birth of him the lofty one, shall verily surpass in glory e'en his peer

3 Him have ye satisfied, singers, as well ye know, primeval germ of Order even from his birth

Ye, knowing e'en his name have told it forth, may we, Vishnu, enjoy the grace of thee the mighty one

4 The sovran Varuna and both the Aśvins wait on this the will of him who guides the Marut host

Vishnu hath power supreme and might that finds the day, and with his friend unbars the stable of the kine ¹

¹ Vishnu assists Indra to release the light or the rain imprisoned in the clouds

Book VIII Hymn 30 VISVEDEVAS

1 Not one of you, ye gods, is small, none of you is a feeble child

All of you, verily, are great

2 Thus be ye lauded, ye destroyers of the foe, ye three and thirty deities,

The gods of man, the holy ones

3 As such defend and succour us, with benedictions speak to us

Lead us not from our fathers' and from Manu's¹ path into the distance far away

4 Ye deities who stay with us, and all ye gods of all mankind,

Give us your wide protection, give shelter for cattle and for steed

Book I Hymn 113 USHAS

1 This light has come, amid all lights the fairest, born is the brilliant, far-extending brightness

Night, sent away for Savitar's² uprising, hath yielded up a birthplace for the morning

2 The fair, the bright is come with her white offspring,³ to her the dark one hath resigned her dwelling

Akin, immortal, following each other, changing their colours both the heavens move onward

3 Common, unending, is the sisters' pathway, taught by the gods, alternately they travel

Fair formed, of different hues and yet one-minded, Night and Dawn clash not, neither do they tarry

4 Bright leader of glad sounds,⁴ our eyes behold her, splendid in hue she hath unclosed the portals

¹ A sage named Manu not the same as the famous law-giver, was an ancestor of the singer of this hymn

² Savitar is the Sun

³ The clouds

⁴ The voices of birds and animals

She, stirring up the world hath shown us riches.
Dawn hath awakened every living creature

5 Rich Dawn, she sets afoot the coiled up sleeper,
one for enjoyment, one for wealth or worship,

Those who saw little for extended vision All
living creatures hath the Dawn awakened

6 One to high sway, one to exalted glory, one to
pursue his gain, and one his labour

All to regard their different vocations, all
moving creature hath the Dawn awakened

7 We see her there, the child of Heaven,
apparent, the young maid flushing in her shining
raiment

Thou sovran lady of all earthly treasure, flush
on us here, auspicious Dawn, this morning

8 She, first of endless morns to come hereafter,
follows the path of morns that have departed

Dawn at her rising urges forth the living him
who is dead she wakes not from his slumber

9 As thou, Dawn, hast caused Agni to be kindled,¹
and with the Sun's eye hast revealed creation,

And hast awakened men to offer worship, thou
hast performed for gods a noble service

10 How long a time and they shall be together—
dawns that have shone and dawns to shine hereafter?

She yearns for former dawns with eager longing,
and goes forth gladly shining with the others

11 Gone are the men who in the days before us
looked on the rising of the earlier morning

We, we the living, now behold her brightness
and they come nigh who shall hereafter see her

I 113

12 Foe-chaser,² born of Law (*rita*), the Law's
protector, joy giver, waker of all pleasant voices,

Auspicious, bringing food for gods' enjoyment,
shine on us here, as best, O Dawn, this morning

¹ In the morning sacrifice

² Of evil spirits

13 From days eternal hath Dawn shone, the goddess, and shows this light to day, endowed with riches

So will she shine on days to come, immortal, she moves on in her own strength, undecaying

14 In the sky's borders hath she shone in splendour the goddess hath thrown off the veil of darkness

Awakening the world with purple horses, on her well-harnessed chariot Dawn approaches

15 Bringing all life sustaining blessings with her showing herself she sends forth brilliant lustre

Last of the countless mornings that have vanished, first of bright morns to come hath Dawn arisen

16 Arise, the breath, the life, again hath reached us darkness hath passed away and light approacheth

She for the Sun hath left a path to travel we have arrived where men prolong existence¹

17 Singing the praises of refulgent mornings with his hymn's web the priest, the poet, rises

Shine then to day, rich maid, on him who lauds thee, shine down on us the gift of life and offspring

18 Dawns giving sons all heroes, kine and horses, shining upon the man who brings oblations—

These let the Soma-presser gain when ending his glad songs louder than the voice of Vāyu²

19 Mother of gods, Aditi's form of glory, ensign of sacrifice, shine forth exalted

Rise up bestowing praise on our devotion all-bounteous, make us chief among the people

20 Whatever splendid wealth the Dawns bring with them to bless the man who offers praise and worship,

Even that may Mitra, Varuna vouchsafe us, and Aditi and Sindhu, Earth and Heaven

¹ i e at the beginning of the life of a new day

² The god of the wind

Book vii Hymn 77. USHAS

1 She hath shone brightly like a youthful woman
stirring to motion every living creature

Agni hath come to feed on mortals' fuel She
hath made light and chased away the darkness

2 Turned to this All, far spreading, she hath risen
and shone in brightness with white robes about her

She hath beamed forth lovely with golden
colours, mother of kine, guide of the days she bringeth

3 Bearing the gods' own eye (the sun), auspicious
lady, leading her courser white and fair to look on,

Distinguished by her beams Dawn shines ap-
parent, come forth to all the world with wondrous
treasure

4 Draw nigh with wealth and dawn away the
foeman prepare for us wide pasture free from danger

Drive away those who hate us, bring us riches
pour bounty, opulent lady, on the singer

5 Send thy most excellent beams to shine and
light us, giving us lengthened days, O Dawn, O
goddess

Granting us food, thou who hast all things
precious, and bounty rich in chariots, kine, and horses

6 O Ushas, nobly born, daughter of Heaven,
whom the Vasistas with their hymns make mighty,

Bestow thou on us vast and glorious riches
Preserve us evermore, ye gods, with blessings

Book x Hymn 72 CREATION

[The poet describes the origin of the gods and the universe]

1 Let us with tuneful skill proclaim these gener-
ations of the gods,

That one may see them when these hymns are
chanted in a future age

2 These¹ Brahmanaspati produced with blast and smelting, like a smith

Existence, in an earlier age of gods, from non-existence sprang

3 Existence in the earliest age of gods, from non-existence sprang

Thereafter were regions² born This sprang from the Productive Power

4 Earth sprang from the Productive Power, the regions from the earth were born

Daksha was born of Aditi, and Aditi was Daksha's child

5 For Aditi, O Daksha, she who is thy daughter, was brought forth

After her were the blessed gods, born of immortal parentage

6 When ye, O gods, in yonder deep, close-clasping one another stood

Thence, as of dancers, from your feet a thickening cloud of dust arose³

7 When, O ye gods, like Yatis,⁴ ye caused all existing things to grow,

Then he brought Sūrya forward who was lying hidden in the sea

8 Eight are the sons⁵ of Aditi who from her body sprang to life

With seven she went to meet the gods she cast Mārtāṇḍa⁶ far away

¹ All beings

² The quarters of the horizon

³ Verses 6 and 7 seem to contain an independent account of the origin of the Universe from the dust caused by the dance of the gods

⁴ Yatis devotees

⁵ Mitrā Varuna Dhātār Arīaman, Anśa, Bhaga, Vivasvān, and Āditva the Sun

⁶ Mārtāṇḍa a Vedic name of Sūrya

9 So with her seven sons Aditi¹ ent forth to meet the earlier age

She brought Mārtāṇḍa thitherward to spring to life and die again

Book Ⅴ Hymn 81 CREATION

[Viśvakarman is represented as the Father, Generator and Creator of all things and the Architect of the world]

1 He who sate down as Hotar-priest the Rishi, our father, offering up all things existing,—

He, seeking through his wish a great possession, came among men on earth as archetypal

2 What was the place whereon he took his station? What was it that supported him? How was it?

Whence Viśvakarman, seeing all, producing the earth, with mighty power disclosed the heavens

3 He who hath eyes on all sides round about him, a mouth on all sides, arms and feet on all sides

He, the sole god, producing earth and heaven, weldeth them with his arms as wings,¹ together

4 What was the tree, what wood in sooth produced it, from which they² fashioned out the earth and heaven?

Ye thoughtful men inquire within your spirit whereon he stood when he established all things

5 Thine highest, lowest, sacrificial natures, and these thy midmost here, O Viśvakarman,

Teach thou thy friends at sacrifice, O blessed, and come thyself, exalted, to our worship³

6 Bring thou thyself, exalted with oblation, O Viśvakarman, Earth and Heaven to worship,⁴

¹ Fanning the flame in which the matter is smelted

² They, 'the makers of the world directed by Parameśvara', says Sāyana.

³ 'Exhilarated, thyself offer up thyself' MUIR

⁴ 'Thyself offer up heaven and earth' MUIR

Let other men around us live in folly here let
us have a rich and liberal patron

7 Let us invoke to day, to aid our labour, the lord
of speech, the thought-swift Viśvakarman

May he hear kindly all our invocations who
gives all bliss for aid whose works are righteous

Book \ Hymn 129 CREATION

[This hymn is said to have been written by Prajāpati, the
Supreme

Here says Max Müller we find the conception of a beginning of
all things and of a state previous even to all existence It is
a hymn full of ideas which to many would seem to necessitate the
admission of a long antecedent period of philosophical thought —
Ancient Sanskrit Literature p 559]

1 Then¹ was not non existent (*asat*) nor existent
there was no realm of air, no sky beyond it

What covered in, and where? and what gave
shelter? Was water there, unfathomed depth of
water?

2 Death was not then, nor was there aught im-
mortal no sign was there, the day's and night's
divider

That One Thing,² breathless, breathed by its
own nature apart from it was nothing whatsoever

3 Darkness there was at first concealed in dark-
ness this All was indiscriminated chaos,

All that existed then was void and formless by
the great power of Warmth was born that Unit,

4 Thereafter rose Desire³ in the beginning,
Desire, the primal seed and germ of Spirit

¹ Then in the beginning

² The primal substance, the unit from which the Universe was
evolved

³ Kāma

Sages who searched with their heart's thought discovered the existent's kinship in the non-existent

5 Transversely was their severing line extended ¹ what was above it then, and what below it?

There were begetters, there were mighty forces, free action here and energy up yonder

6 Who verily knows and who can here declare it, whence it was born and whence comes this creation?

The gods are later than this world's production Who knows then whence it first came into being?

7 He, the first origin of this creation, whether he formed it all or did not form it,

Whose eye controls this world in highest heaven, he verily knows it, or perhaps he knows not

Book X Hymn 14 YAMA AND THE SOULS OF THE DEAD

NOTE —The verses of this hymn are used in the Hindu funeral ceremony as it is prescribed in the Sūtras See *Asvalavāna, Grihyasūtra* iv 1-6 The hymn is a funeral address, partly to Yama, the god of the dead, and partly to the soul of the departed whose body is being consumed on the pile Yama, it will be remembered, was originally the first man who died and so showed the souls of his successors the way to the home of the departed

1 Honour the king with thine oblations, Yama, Vivasvān's son, who gathers men together,

Who travelled to the lofty heights, above us, who searches out and shows the path to many

2 Yama first found for us the road to travel this pasture never can be taken from us

Men born on earth tread their own paths that lead them whither our ancient Fathers have departed.

¹ To separate the upper and lower worlds

3 Mātali¹ prospers there with Kavyas,² Yama with Angiras'³ sons, Bṛihaspati with Rikvans⁴

Exalters of the gods, by gods exalted, some joy in praise and some in our oblation

4 Come, seat thee on this bed of grass, O Yama, in company with Angirasas and Fathers

Let texts recited by the sages bring thee O king, let this oblation make thee joyful

5 Come, Yama, with the Angirasas the holy, rejoice thee here with the children of Virūpa⁵

Seated on sacred grass at this our worship I call Vivasvān, too, thy father hither

6 Our fathers are Angirasas, Navagvas, Atharvans, Bhṛigus⁶ who deserve the soma

May these, the holy, look on us with favour, may we enjoy their gracious loving kindness

[The following verses are addressed to the spirit of the dead man whose funeral rites are being celebrated]

7 Go forth, go forth upon the ancient pathways whereon our sires of old have gone before us

There shalt thou look on both the kings enjoying their sacred food, god Varuṇa and Yama

8 Meet Yama, meet the Fathers (Pitris), meet the merit of free or ordered acts, in highest heaven.

Leave sin and evil, seek anew thy dwelling, and bright with glory wear another body

9 Go hence, depart ye,⁷ fly in all directions this place for him the Fathers have provided

¹ Mātali a divine being perhaps Indra

² A class of the spirits of the dead

³ The typical first sacrificers, Angirasas

⁴ A class of spirits who sing the praise of Bṛihaspati

⁵ A sub-division of the Angirasas

⁶ Ancient priestly families

⁷ According to Sāyana the ninth stanza is addressed to the Pisāchas and other evil spirits that haunt the place of cremation

Yama bestows on him a place to rest in adorned
with dais and beams of light and waters

10 Run¹ and outspeed the two dogs, Saramā's
offspring, brindled, four-eyed, upon thy happy path-
way

Draw nigh, then to the gracious minded Fathers
where they rejoice in company with Yama,

11 And those two dogs of thine, Yama, the
watchers, four eyed, who look on men and guard the
pathway,—

Entrust this man, O king, to their protection,
and with prosperity and health endow him

12 Dark hued, insatiate, with distended nostrils,
Yama's two envoys roam among the people,

May they restore to us a fair existence here and,
to day, that we may see the sunlight

[*The three following stanzas are addressed to the
priests*]

13 To Yama pour the soma, bring to Yama conse-
crated gifts

To Yama sacrifice prepared and heralded by
Agni goes

14 Offer to Yama holy gifts enriched with butter,
and draw near,

So may he grant that we may live long days of
life among the gods

15 Offer to Yama, to the king, oblation very rich in
meath

Bow down before the rishis of the ancient times,
who made this path in days of old

16 Into² the three great jars it falls six realms,
the only lofty place,

The Gāyatrī, the Tristup, all metres in Yama
are contained

¹ The spirit of the dead is addressed

² This stanza is unintelligible

Book \ Hymn 15 THE FATHERS

[This hymn is said to have been composed by Sankha, son of Yama. It is the only one specially addressed to the Pitris. Offerings are made to them of which they are invited to partake and blessings are solicited.]

1 May they ascend, the lowest, highest, midmost, the Fathers who deserve a share of soma

May they who have attained the life of spirits, skilled in Law (*rita*), harmless, aid us when we call them

2 Now let us pay this homage to the Fathers, to those who passed of old, and those who followed

Those who have rested in the earthly region, and those who dwell among the mighty races

3 I have attained the gracious-minded Fathers, I have gained son and progeny from Vishnu

They who enjoy pressed juices with oblation, seated on sacred grass, come oftenest hither

4 Fathers who sit on sacred grass, come, help us: these offerings have we made for you, accept them

So come to us with most auspicious favour, and give us health and wealth without a trouble

5 May they, the Fathers worthy of the soma, invited to their favourite oblations

Laid on the sacred grass, come nigh and listen: may they be gracious unto us and bless us

6 Bowing your bended knees and seated southward, accept this sacrifice of ours with favour,

Punish us not for any sin, O Fathers, which we through human frailty have committed

7 Lapped in the bosom of the purple Mornings, give riches to the man who brings oblations

Grant to your sons a portion of that treasure, and, present, give them energy, ye Fathers

8 Our ancient Fathers, who deserve the soma who came, most noble, to our soma banquet—

With these let Yama, yearning with the yearning, rejoicing eat our offerings at his pleasure

9 Come to us, Agni, with the gracious Fathers who dwell in glowing light, the very Kavyas¹,

Who thirsted 'mid the gods, who hasten hither, oblation winners, theme of singers' praises

10 Come, Agni, come with countless ancient Fathers, dwellers in light, primeval, god-adorers,

Eaters and drinkers of oblations, truthful, who travel with the deities and Indra

11 Fathers whom Agni's flames have tasted,² come ye nigh in perfect order take ye each your proper place

Eat sacrificial food presented on the grass grant riches with a multitude of hero sons

12 Thou, Agni Jātavedas,³ when entreated, didst bear the offerings which thou madest fragrant,

And give them to the Fathers who did eat them with Svadhā⁴ Eat, thou god, the gift we bring thee

13 Thou, Jātavedas, knowest well the number of Fathers who are here and who are absent,

Of Fathers whom we know and whom we know not, accept the sacrifice well-prepared with portions

14 They who, consumed by fire or not cremated, joy in their offering in the midst of heaven—

Grant them, O sovran lord, the life they merit, and their own body as thy pleasure wills it

Book \ Hymn 18 THE FUNERAL HYMN

[This hymn, claimed to be written by a son of Yama, is important, as sanctioning widow marriage Verse 8 The barbarous practice of widow burning was based upon a mistranslation of

¹ Kavyas the spirits of an ancient pious race

² Whose bodies have been cremated

³ See page 179 note

⁴ Svadhā is a sacrificial exclamation Or it may mean the sacrificial offering due to each

verse 7 The word *Agri* was altered into *Agri* c Max Müller describes this as perhaps the most flagrant instance of what can be done by an unscrupulous priesthood Thousands of lives been sacrificed on the authority of a passage which was mangled mis-translated and misapplied]

1 Go hence, O Death,¹ pursue thy special pathway apart from that which gods are wont to travel

To thee I say it who hast eyes and hearest - touch not our offspring, injure not our heroes

[Verse 2 is addressed to the kinsman of the deceased]

2 As ye have come effacing Mṛtyu's footstep,¹ to farther times prolonging your existence,

May ye be rich in children and possessions, cleansed, purified, and meet for sacrificing

3 Divided from the dead are these, the living now is our calling on the gods successful

We have come forth for dancing and for laughter, to farther times, prolonging our existence

4 Here I² erect this ramparts for the living, let none of these, none other, reach this limit

May they survive a hundred lengthened autumns, and may they bury death beneath this mountain

5 As the days follow days in close succession, as with the seasons duly come the seasons,

As each successor fails not his fore-goer, so form lives of these, O great Ordainer³

6 Live your full lives and find old age delightful, all of you striving one behind the other

May Tvastar, maker of fair things, be gracious and lengthen out the days of your existence

¹Death Mṛtyu distinct from Yama who was ruler of the departed *Effacing Mṛtyu's footstep* means avoiding the path of death

²The Adhvaryu raised a mound as limiting Death's domain

³Dhātār a divine being who is manager of all things

7 Let these unwidowed dames with noble husbands adorn themselves with fragrant balm and unguent

Decked with fair jewels, tearless, free from sorrow, first let the matrons pass unto their houses

[Verse 8 is spoken by the husband's brother, and others, to the wife of the dead man, while she is made to leave her husband's body]

8 Rise, come unto the world of life, O woman ¹ come he is lifeless by whose side thou liest

Wifehood with this thy husband was thy portion, who took thy hand and wooed thee as a lover

9 From his dead hand I take the bow he carried, that it may be our power and might and glory ²

There art thou, there, and here with noble heroes may we o'ercome all hosts that fight against us

[Verse 10 is addressed to the body The urn containing the ashes was buried The earth is asked not to press heavily upon it]

10 Betake thee to the lap of earth the mother, of earth far spreading, very kind and gracious

Young dame, wool soft, unto the guerdon-giver, may she preserve thee from Destruction's ³ bosom

11 Heave thyself, Earth, nor press thee downward heavily afford him easy access, gently tending him

Earth, as a mother wraps her skirt about her child, so cover him

12 Now let the heaving earth be free from motion yea, let a thousand clods remain above him

Be they to him a home distilling fatness, here let them ever be his place of refuge

¹ This is interpreted as showing that the widow remarried

² Addressed to a dead Kshatriya

³ Destruction Nirriti

[Verse 13 is addressed to the urn containing the ashes]

13 I stay the earth from thee, while over thee I place this piece of earth May I be free from injury,

Here let the Fathers keep this pillar firm for thee, and there let Yama make thee an abiding place

14 Even as an arrow's feathers, they have laid me down at day's decline

My parting speech have I drawn back as 'twere a courser with the rein

Book \ Hymn 191 THE PUBLIC ASSEMBLY

[This is the last hymn of the Rig-Veda The subject is agreement in a general assembly (*Samiti*) of the people on some important occasion, such as the election of a King]

1 Thou, mighty Agni, gatherest all that is precious for thy friend

Bring us all treasures as thou art enkindled in libation's place

2 Assemble, speak together let your minds be all of one accord,

As ancient gods unanimous sit down to their appointed share

3 The place is common, common the assembly, common the mind, so be their thought united

A common purpose do I lay before you, and worship with your general oblation

4 One and the same be your resolve, and be your minds of one accord

United be the thoughts of all that all may happily agree

Book viii Hymn 69 THE CHARIOT RACE

The Hymn for success in a coming chariot race, a hymn to Indra, has been quoted in the chapter on the Social Life of the Early Aryans (p 16)

Book X 117 LIBERALITY

[This hymn in praise of liberality is said to have been composed by the rishi Bhikshu (the 'beggar') son of Angiras]

1 The gods have not ordained hunger to be our death even to the well-fed man comes death in varied shape

The riches of the liberal never waste away, while he who will not give finds none to comfort him

2 The man with food in store who, when the needy comes in miserable case begging for bread to eat,

Hardens his heart against him—even when of old he did him service—finds not one to comfort him

3 Bounteous is he who gives unto the beggar who comes to him in want of food and feeble

Success attends him in the shout of battle He makes a friend of him in future troubles

4 No friend is he who to his friend and comrade who comes imploring food, will offer nothing

Let him depart—no home is that to rest in—and rather seek a stranger to support him

5 Let the rich satisfy the poor implorer, and bend his eye upon a longer pathway¹

Riches come now to one, and now to another, and like the wheels of cars are ever rolling

6 The foolish man wins food with fruitless labour that food—I speak the truth—shall be his ruin

He feeds no trusty friend, no man to love him All guilt is he who eats with no partaker

7 The ploughshare ploughing makes the food that feeds us, and with its feet cuts through the path it follows

¹ Carefully consider the future, remembering that he may be in need some day

Better the speaking¹ than the silent Brahman
the liberal friend outvalues him who gives not

8 He with one foot hath far outrun the biped, and
the two-footed catches the three-footed

Four-footed creatures come when bipeds call
them, and stand and look where five are met together²

9 The hands are both alike their labour differs
The yield of sister milch-kine is unequal

Twins even differ in their strength and vigour
two, even kinsmen, differ in their bounty

Book 1 Hymn 126 A SAGE'S THANKSGIVING TO A KING

[The hymn writer, Kakshivān feel asleep on a journey. He was roused in the morning by Rāja Svanava who took him home and gave him at once his ten daughters in marriage presenting him at the same time with the gifts mentioned in the hymn. The poet praises the liberality of Svanava, here called Bhāvya from his father Bhava.]

1 With wisdom I present these lively praises of
Bhāvya dweller on the bank of Sindhu (the Indus),

For he, unconquered king, desiring glory, hath
furnished me a thousand sacrifices

2 A hundred necklets from the king, beseeching,
a hundred gift steeds I at once accepted,

Of the lord's cows a thousand, I Kakshivān
His deathless glory hath he spread to heaven

¹ The priest who duly recites the Vedas for which duty he has been engaged

² The victory is not always won by those who seem most likely to win. The one footed (*ekapād*) is the Sun which surpasses the biped man. The biped catches the three-footed old man with his staff. The four footed are dogs. The five are a group of men at which the dogs look uncertain whether their own masters are among them or not.

- 3 Horses of dusky colour stood beside me, ten chariots, Svanava's gift, with mares to draw them
Kine numbering sixty thousand followed after
Kakshivān gained them when the days were closing
- 4 Forty bay horses of the ten cars' master before
a thousand lead the long procession
Reeling in joy Kakshivān's sons and Pajra's
have groomed the coursers decked with pearly trappings
- 5 An earlier gift for you have I accepted, eight cows, good milkers, and three harnessed horses,
Pajras, who with your wains with your great kinsman like troops of subjects have been fain for glory¹

Book \ Hymn 71 THE WISE JÑANAM

[The commentator Sāyana says that this difficult hymn refers to Paramabrahmajñanam, knowledge of the highest truth so that man may be united with the Supreme]

- 1 When men, Brīhaspati, giving names to objects, sent out Vāk's² first and earliest utterances,
All that was excellent and spotless, treasured within them, was disclosed through their affection
- 2 Where like men cleansing corn flour in a crib-ble, the wise in spirit have created language,
Friends see and recognize the marks of friendship
their speech retains the blessed sign imprinted
- 3 With sacrifice the trace of Vāk they followed,
and found her harbouring within the rishis³
They brought her, dealt her fourth in many

¹ The hymn ends with two more verses, supposed to be part of a love song which have no apparent relation to the rest of the hymn

² Vāk voice or speech deified

³ Men are to learn that the rishis alone understand speech for religious purposes

places seven singers make her tones resound in concert

4 One man hath ne'er seen Vāk, and yet he seeth one man hath hearing but hath never heard her

But to another hath she shown her beauty as a fond well-dressed woman to her husband

5 One man they call a laggard, dull in friendship they never urge him on to deeds of valour

He wanders on in profitless illusion the Voice he heard yields neither fruit nor blossom

6 No part in Vāk hath he who hath abandoned his own dear friend who knows the truth of friendship

Even if he hears her still in vain he listens. naught knows he of the path of righteous action

7 Unequal in the quickness of spirit are friends endowed alike with eyes and hearing

Some looked like tanks that reach the mouth or shoulder, others like pools of water fit to bathe in

8 When friendly Brahmins sacrifice together with mental impulse which the heart hath fashioned

They leave one far behind through their attainments, and some who count as Brahmins wander elsewhere

9 Those men who step not back and move not forward,¹ nor Brahmins, nor preparers of libations,

Having attained to Vāk in sinful fashion spin out their thread in ignorance like spinsters

10 All friends are joyful in the friend who cometh in triumph, having conquered in assembly

He is their blame-avorter, food-provider prepared is he and fit for deed and vigour

11 One plies his constant task reciting verses² one sings the holy psalms³ in Sakvarī measures

¹ Take no active part in the ceremonies

² Reciting verses means verses of the Rīg-veda This is the Hom

³ The holy psalm the Gāvatra or Sāman This is the Udgātr, or chanter

One more, the Brahman, tells the lore of being,
and one lays down the rules of sacrificing ¹

Book vi Hymn 28 Cows ²

1 The kine have come and brought good fortune :
let them rest in the cow-pen and be happy near us

Here let them stay prolific, many-coloured, and
yield through many morns their milk for Indra

2 Indra aids him who offers sacrifice and gifts he
takes not what is his, and gives him more thereto

Increasing ever more and more his wealth, he
makes the pious dwell within unbroken bounds

3 These are ne'er lost, no robber ever injures
them no evil-minded foe attempts to harass them

The master of the kine lives many a year with
these, the cows whereby he pours his gifts and serves
the gods

4 The charger with his dusty brow o'ertakes them
not,³ and never to the shambles do they take their way.

These cows, the cattle of the pious worshipper,
roam over wide spread pasture where no danger is

5 To me the cows seem Bhaga, they seem Indra,⁴
they seem a portion of the first poured Soma

These present cows, they, O ye men, are Indra.
I long for Indra with my heart and spirit

6 O cows, ye fatten e'en the worn and wasted,
and make the unlovely beautiful to look on

Prosper my house, ye with auspicious voices
Your power is glorified in our asssemblies

7 Crop good pasturage and be prolific, drink pure
sweet water at goodly drinking-places

¹ The Adhvaryu

² The cows are the deified object of the hymn except in stanza
³ and part of 8, where the deity is Indra

³ They are not to be captured by raiders

⁴ The cows seem to be like gods because of their goodness

Never be thief or sinful man your master, and
may the dart of Rudra still avoid you

8 Now let this close admixture be close inter-
mingled with these cows

Mixt with the steer's prolific flow,¹ and, Indra,
with thy hero might

Book VII Hymn 103 FROGS

[The hymn says Max Müller which is called a panegyric of
the frogs is clearly a satire on the priests It evidently belongs to
a late period of Vedic poetry.]

1 They who lay quiet for a year, the Brahmans
who fulfil their vows,

The frogs have lifted up their voice, the voice
Parjanya hath inspired

2 What time on these, as on a dry skin lying in
the pool's bed, the floods of heaven descended,

The music of the frogs comes forth in concert
like the cows' lowing with their calves beside them

3 When at the coming of the Rains the water has
poured upon them as they yearned and thirsted,

One seeks another as he talks and greets him
with cries of pleasure as son his father

4 Each of these twain receives the other kindly,
while they are revelling in the flow of waters,

When the frog moistened by the rain springs
forward, and Green and Spotty both combine their
voices

5 When one of these repeats the other's language,
as he who learns the lesson of the teacher,

Your every limb seems to be growing larger as
ye converse with eloquence on the waters

6 One is Cow-bellow and Goat-bleat the other,
one frog is Green and one of them is Spotty

¹ The reference is to the mixture of milk and soma-juice Soma
is the steer The libation was offered to Indra

They bear one common name, and yet they vary, and, talking, modulate the voice diversely

7 As Brahmans, sitting round the brimful vessel, talk at the soma-rite of Atirātra¹

So, frogs, ye gather round the pool to honour this day of all the year, the first of Rain-time

8 These Brahmans with the soma-juice, performing their year long rite,² have lifted up their voices,

And these Adhvarvus, sweating with their kettles (or oblations), come forth and show themselves, and none are hidden

9 They keep the twelve month's god appointed order, and never do the men neglect the season

Soon as the Rain time in the year returneth, these who were heated kettles³ gain their freedom

10 Cow-bellow and Goat-bleat have granted riches, and Green and Spotty have vouchsafed us treasure

The frogs who give us cows in hundreds lengthen our lives in this most fertilizing season

Book III Hymn 33 TWO RIVERS AND A SAGE

[This is a dialogue between the sage Viśvamitra and the rivers Vipāś (the modern Biās) and Śutudrī (the modern Sutlej) The story is that the sage sung this hymn at the confluence of the Vipāś and Śutudrī in order to make them fordable when he wished to cross It may refer to the early journeys of the Aryans]

Viśvamitra addresses the rivers

1 Forth from the bosom of the mountains, eager as two swift mares with loosened rein contending,

Like two bright mother cows who lick their youngling, Vipāś and Śutudrī speed down their waters

¹ Probably a ceremony accompanied by the recitation of hymns at night

² Sāyana explains this as a reference to a series of sacrifices, the *Gavām ayanam*, 'the going of the cows,' lasting a year

³ Scorched in the hot weather

2 Impelled by Indra whom ye pray to urge you,
ye move as 'twere on chariots to the ocean

Flowing together, swelling with your billows,
O lucid streams, each of you seeks the other

3 I have attained the most maternal river, we
have approached Vipāś, the broad, the blessed

Licking as 'twere their calf the pair of mothers
flow onward to their common home together

The rivers speak

4 We two who rise and swell with billowy waters
move forward to the home which gods have made us

Our flood may not be stayed when urged to
motion What would the singer, calling to the rivers?

The sage speaks

5 Linger a little at my friendly bidding, rest,
holy ones, a moment in your journey

With hymn sublime soliciting your favour,
Kusika's son hath called unto the river

The rivers speak

6 Indra who wields the thunder dug our channels
he smote down Vritra, him who stayed our currents

Savitar, god, the lovely-handed, led us, and at
his sending forth we flow expanded

The sage speaks

7 That hero deed of Indra must be lauded for
ever that he rent Ahī¹ in pieces

He smote away the obstructors with his thunder,
and eager for their course forth flowed the waters

The rivers speak

8 Never forget this word of thine, O singer, which
future generations shall re-echo

In hymns, O bard, show us thy loving-kindness
Humble us not mid men To thee be honour.

¹ The serpent demon of drought

The sage speaks

9 Listen, ye sisters, to the bard who cometh to
you from far away with car and wagon
Bow lowly down, be easy to be traversed
stay rivers, with your floods below our axles

The rivers speak

10 Yea, we will listen to thy words, O singer
With wain and cart from far away thou comest
Low will I bend me, like a nursing mother,
and yield me as a maiden to her lover

The sage speaks

11 Soon as the Bharatas¹ have fared across thee,
the warrior band, urged on and sped by Indra,
Then let your streams flow on in rapid motion
I crave your favour who deserve our worship

12 The warrior host, the Bharatas, fared over the
singer won the favour of the rivers
Swell with your billows, hasting, pouring riches
Fill full your channels, and roll swiftly onward

13 So let your wave bear up the pins, and ye, O
waters, spare the thongs
And never may the pair of bulls, harmless and
sinless, waste away²

Book 1 Hymn 40 THE ECLIPSE

[The Hindu explanation of eclipses is that they are caused by the
sura Rāhu seeking to seize the sun and moon In the Vedas he
called Śarbhānu The sun is supposed to be delivered by this
mn, chanted by the rishi Atri and expresses his gratitude The
ses referring to the eclipse alone are quoted]

¹ The Bharatas were an important Aryan tribe of the same race
as Viśvāmitra
² The thirteenth verse seems to be a later addition It is in
different metre

The sage speaks

5 O Sūrya, when the Asura's descendant, Svarbhānu, pierced thee through and through with darkness,
 All creatures looked like one who is bewildered,
 who knoweth not the place where he is standing

6 What time thou smotest down Svarbhānu's magic that spread itself beneath the sky, O Indra,

By his fourth¹ sacred-prayer Atri² discovered
 Sūrya concealed in gloom that stayed his function

The sun speaks

7 Let not the oppressor with this dread through anger swallow me up, for I am thine, O Atri

Mitra art thou, the sender of true blessings ·
 thou and king Varuna be both my helpers

The sage speaks

8 The Brahman Atri, as he set the press stones,³ serving the gods with praise and adoration,

Established in the heaven the eye of Sūrya, and caused Svarbhānu's magic arts to vanish

9 The Atris found the Sun again, him whom Svarbhānu of the brood

Of Asuras had pierced with gloom This none beside had power to do

Book \ Hymn 34. THE GAMBLER

[In this hymn a gambler apparently describes his own experience]

1 Sprung from tall trees⁴ on windy heights, these rollers transport me as they turn upon the table

¹ Stanzas 5-8 of this hymn

² Atri is the rishi singing this hymn

³ For pressing out the juice of the soma-plant

⁴ Nuts were used for dice in early times

Dearer to me the die that never slumbers than the deep draught of Mūjavān's own soma ¹

2 She never vexed me nor was angry with me, but to my friends and me was ever gracious

For the die's sake whose single point is final mine own devoted wife I alienated

3 My wife holds me aloof, her mother hates me the wretched man finds none to give him comfort

As of a costly horse grown old and feeble, I find not any profit of the gamester

4 Others caress the wife of him whose riches the die hath coveted, that rapid courser

Of him speak father, mother, brothers, saying, We know him not bind him and take him with you

5 When I resolve to play with these no longer, my friends depart from me and leave me lonely,

When the brown dice, thrown on the board, have rattled, like a fond girl I seek the place of meeting

6 The gamester seeks the gambling-house, and wonders, his body all afire, Shall I be lucky?

Still do the dice extend his eager longing, staking his gains against his adversary

7 Dice, verily, are armed with goads and driving-hooks, deceiving and tormenting, causing grievous woe

They give frail gifts and then destroy the man who wins, thickly anointed with the player's fairest good

8 Merrily sports their troop, the three-and-fifty,² like Savitar the god, whose ways are faithful

They bend not even to the mighty's anger the king himself pays homage and reveres them

9 Downward they roll, and then spring quickly upward, and, handless, force the man with hands to serve them

¹ Mūjavān was a mountain on which the soma-plant grew

² The meaning is uncertain

Cast on the board like lumps of magic charcoal
though cold themselves they burn the heart to ashes

10 The gambler's wife is left forlorn and wretched
the mother mourns the son who wanders homeless

In constant fear in debt and seeking riches he
goes by night unto the home of others

11 Sad is the gambler when he sees a matron,
another's wife and his well ordered dwelling

He yokes the brown steeds¹ in the early morn-
ing and when the fire is cold sinks down an outcast

12 To the great captain² of your mighty army,
who hath become the host's imperial leader

To him I show my ten extended fingers I
speak the truth No wealth am I withholding.

13 Play not with dice no, cultivate thy corn-land
Enjoy the gain and deem that wealth sufficient

There are thy cattle, there thy wife, O gambler
So this good Savitar himself hath told me.

14 Make me your friend show us some little
mercy Assail us not with your terrific fierceness,

Appeased be your malignity and anger and let
the brown dice snare some other captive

Book vi Hymn 75 WEAPONS OF WAR

[Griffith says that the deified objects are the armour and warlike weapons chariot, chariot, horses etc and the tutelary deities addressed, mentioned or invoked in the hymn. The hymn is too long for quotation. The following are some of the principal verses.]

The bow and arrows

2 With bow let us win kine with bow the battle,
with bow be victors in our hot encounters

¹ Begins throwing the brown dice

² The dice marked with highest numbers

³ To show that I have nothing left.

The bow brings grief and sorrow to the foeman :
armed with the bow may we subdue all regions

3 Close to his ear, as fain to speak, she¹ presses,
holding her well-loved friend in her embraces

Strained on the bow, she whispers like a
woman²—this bowstring that preserves us in the
combat

4. These meeting like a woman and her lover,
bear, mother-like, their child³ upon their bosom

May the two bow-ends, starting swift asunder,
scatter, in unison, the foes who hate us

5 With many a son, father of many daughters,⁴
he clangs and clashes as he goes to battle,

Slung on the back, pouring his brood, the quiver
vanquishes all opposing bands and armies

11 Her tooth a deer, dressed in an eagle's feathers,
bound with cow-hide, launched forth, she flieth onward

There where the heroes speed hither and thither,
there may the arrows shelter and protect us

16 Loosed from the bowstring fly away, thou arrow,
sharpened by our prayer

Go to the foemen, strike them home, and let
not one be left alive.

The charioteer, chariot and his whip

6 Upstanding in the car the skilful charioteer
guides his strong horses on witherso'e'er he will

See and admire the strength of those controlling
reins which from behind declare the will of him who
drives

7 Horses whose hoofs rain dust are neighing
loudly, yoked to the chariots, showing forth their
vigour

¹ The bowstring

² Homer likens the sound to the call of a swallow

³ The arrow

⁴ The quiver is said to be father of sons and daughters because
the words signifying 'arrow' are both masculine and feminine

With their forefeet descending on the foemen,
they, never flinching, trample and destroy them

13 He lays his blows upon their backs, he deals
his blows upon their thighs.

Thou, whip, who urgest horses, drive sagacious
horses in the fray

The hymn concludes thus

19 Whoso would kill us, whether he be a strange
foe or one of us,

May all the gods discomfit him My nearest,
closest mail is prayer

Book 1 Hymn 187 ANNASTUTI, PRAISE OF FOOD

['According to Saunaka, this hymn should be recited by a person about to eat when his food will never disagree with him, its repetition also accompanied with oblations and worship will secure him against want of food, and if he should have taken poison its silent repetition will act as an antidote '—WILSON]

1 Now will I glorify Food that upholds great
strength,

By whose invigorating power Trita¹ rent Vritra
limb from limb

2 O pleasant Food,² O Food of meath, thee have
we chosen for our own,

So be our kind protector thou

3 Come hitherward to us, O Food, auspicious
with auspicious help,

Health-bringing, not unkind, a dear and guile-
less friend

4 These juices which, O Food, are thine through-
out the regions are diffused

Like winds they have their place in heaven

5 These gifts of thine, O Food, O Food most
sweet to taste,

¹ Trita is Indra pervading the three worlds

² The god addressed is Soma

These savours of thy juices work like creatures
that have mighty necks ¹

6 In thee, O Food, is set the spirit of great gods
Under thy flag brave deeds were done he slew
the dragon with thy help

7 If thou be gone unto the splendour of the clouds,
Even from thence, O Food of meath, prepared
for our enjoyment, come

8 Whatever morsel we consume from waters or
from plants of earth, O Soma, wa\ thou fat thereby,

9 What, Soma, we enjoy from thee in milky food
or barley-brew, Vātāpi ² grow thou fat thereby

10 O Vegetable, cake of meal, be wholesome, firm,
and strengthening
Vātāpi, ⁴ grow thou fat thereby

11 O Food, from thee as such have we drawn forth
with lauds, like cows, our sacrificial gifts,
From thee who banquetest with gods, from thee
who banquetest with us

Book vii Hymn 55 VASTOSPATI AND INDRA THE SPELL OF THE HOUSE-BREAKER

[The hymn appears to be made up of three unconnected
pieces The first verse is addressed to Vāstospati the guardian
god of the house Verses 2-4 are addressed by the spirits of Indra's
worshippers to one of Yama's dogs who would prevent there
entering the home of the pious dead Saramā the hound of Indra,
was the mother of the two spotted watch dogs of Yama Verses
5-8 form a sleep song It was recited by thieves and house-breakers
to put people to sleep]

1 Vāstospati, who killest all disease, and wearest
every form,
Be an auspicious friend to us

¹ Bullocks

² The fermenting soma-juice or, according to Sāyana the body

2 When, O bright son of Saramā, thou showest,
tawny hued! thy teeth,

They gleam like lances' points within thy mouth
when thou wouldest bite go thou to sleep

3 Saramā's son, retrace thy way bark at the
robber and the thief

At Indra's singers barkest thou? Why dost
thou seek to terrify us? Go to sleep

4 Be on thy guard against the boar, and let the
boar beware of thee

At Indra's singers barkest thou? Why dost
thou seek to terrify us? Go to sleep

5 Sleep mother, let the father sleep, sleep dog
and master of the house

Let all the kinsmen sleep, sleep all the people
who are round about

6 The man who sits, the man who walks, and
whosoever looks on us,

Of these we closely shut the eyes, even as we
closely shut this house

7 The Bull who hath a thousand horns, who rises
up from out the sea—

By him the strong and mighty one we lull and
make the people sleep

8 The women sleeping in the court, lying with-
out, or stretched on beds,

The matrons with their odorous sweets¹—these,
one and all, we lull to sleep

Book vii Hymn 104 A SPELL AGAINST EVIL SPIRITS

[The hymn consists chiefly of imprecations directed against Rākshasas demons and Yātudhānas a kind of goblin. These foes are supposed to go about at night disturbing sacrifices and pious men ensnaring and even devouring human beings and

¹ The garlands of flowers worn on festive occasions

generally hostile to the human race The hymn is too long to be quoted in full]

1 Indra and Soma, burn, destroy the demon foe,
send downward, O ye Bulls, those who add gloom
to gloom

Annihilate the fools, slay them and burn them
up chase them away from us, pierce the voracious
ones

2 India and Soma, let sin round the wicked boil
like as a caldron set amid the flames of fire

Against the foe of prayer, devourer of raw flesh,
the vile fiend fierce of eve, keep ye perpetual hate

3 Indra and Soma, plunge the wicked in the
depth, yea, cast them into darkness that hath no
support,

So that not one of them may ever thence return
so may your wrathful might prevail and conquer them

4 Indra and Soma, hurl your deadly crushing bolt
down on the wicked fiend from heaven and from the
earth.

Yea, forge out of the mountains your celestial
dart wherewith ye burn to death the warring demon
race

5 Indra and Soma, cast ye downward out of
heaven your deadly darts of stone burning with fiery
flame,

Eternal, scorching darts, plunge the voracious
ones within the depth, and let them sink without a
sound

18 Spread out, ye Maruts search among the people
seize ye and grind the Rākshasas to pieces

Who fly abroad transformed to birds, at night
time, or sully and pollute our holy worship

24 Indra destroy the demon, male and female,
joying and triumphing in arts of magic

Let the fools' gods¹ with bent necks fall and
perish, and see no more the sun when he arises

¹ Fools' gods, *mura devata* perhaps a species of demon

25 Look each one hither, look around Indra and Soma, watch ye well

Cast forth your weapon at the fiends against the sorcerers hurl your bolt

Book \ Hymn 145 A SPELL AGAINST A RIVAL WIFE

Sapatnībādhanam

[The hymn is a spell to rid a jealous wife of a more favoured rival The singer is Indrāni the consort of Indra]

1 From out the earth I dig this plant, an herb of most effectual power,

Wherewith one quells the rival wife and gains the husband for oneself

2 Auspicious, with expanded leaves, sent by the gods, victorious plant,

Blow thou the rival wife away, and make my husband only mine

3 Stronger am I O stronger one, yea, mightier than the mightier¹

And she who is my rival wife is lower than the lowest dames

4 Her very name I utter not she takes no pleasure in this man

Far into distance most remote drive we the rival wife away

5 I am the conqueror, and thou, thou also art victorious

As victory attends us both we will subdue my fellow wife

6 I have gained thee for vanquisher, have grasped thee with a stronger spell

As a cow hastens to her calf, so let thy spirit¹ speed to me, hasten like water on its way

¹ The spirit of the husband overpowered by the spell.

Book \ Hymn 164 A SPELL AGAINST EVIL
DREAMS (*Duhsvapnaghnām*)

1 Vaunt, thou master of the mind¹ Depart, and
vanish far away
Look on Destruction² far from hence The live

man's mind is manifold
2 A happy boon do men elect, a mighty blessing
they obtain
Bliss with Vanasvata³ they see The live man's

mind seeks many a place
3 When by address, by blame, by imprecation we
have committed sin, awake or sleeping,
All hateful acts of ours, all evil doings may

Agni bear away to distant places
4 When, Indra, Brahmanaspati, our deeds are
wrongful and unjust,
Prachetās the Āngirasa⁴ present our foes from

troubling us
5 We have prevailed this day and won we are
made free from sin and guilt
Ill thoughts, that visit us awake or sleeping,

seize the man we hate, yea, seize the man who hateth
us

¹ The spirit of evil dreams

² The goddess Nirriti

³ Sūyanti says that Vanasvata is Yama, son of Vasuān, who
presides over evil dreams

⁴ Prachetās the fishi who is said to have composed this hymn
was a descendant of the early priestly family of the Āngirāsas
special worshippers of Varuna

THE SĀMA-VEDA

AS already mentioned, the Sāma-veda consists largely of extracts from the Rīg-veda. Hymns, portions of hymns, and detached verses are transposed and rearranged without reference to their original order, and there are frequent variations from the text of the Rīg-veda. The first hymn is considered a later addition. The second hymn, as translated by Griffith, is given to afford some idea of the composition of the book. The references appended to each verse show where the verse appears in the Rīg-veda.

1 O Agni, God, the people sing reverent praise to thee for strength,

With terrors trouble thou the foe!

viii 64 10

2 I seek with song your messenger, oblation-bearer, lord of wealth,

Immortal, best at sacrifice

ix 8 1

3 Still turning to their aim in thee the sacrificer's sister hymns

Have come to thee before the wind

viii 91 13

4 To thee illuminer of night, O Agni, day by day, with prayer,

Bringing thee reverence, we come

i 1 7

5 Help, thou who knowest lauds, this work, a
lovely hymn in Rudra's praise,
Adorable in every house

i 27 10

6 To this fair sacrifice to drink the milky draught
art thou called forth
O Agni with the Maruts come¹

i 19 1

7 With homage will I reverence thee, Agni, like
a long-tailed steed,
Imperial lord of holy rites

i 27 1

8 As Aurva and as Bhrigu called, as Apnavāna¹
called, I call
The radiant Agni robed with sea

viii 91 4.

9 When he enkindles Agni, man should with his
heart attend the song
I kindle Agni till he glows

viii 91 22

10 Then, verily, they see the light refulgent of
primeval seed,
Kindled on yonder side of heaven

viii 6 30

¹ Names of sages

THE YAJUR-VEDA

IT is practically impossible to give a reading from the Yajur-veda as it would not be intelligible without an extensive commentary on almost every clause. The Fortieth Book of the White Yajur-veda might have been quoted, but it is not typical, being really a short Upanishad.

A verse from the ordinary matter of the book will justify the above statement.

White Yajur-veda Book 4 Verse 12

Thou¹ art a lioness All hail Thou art a lioness
winning Ādityas All-hail

Thou art a lioness winning Brahmans and Nobles
All hail

Thou art a lioness that wins fair off spring, win abundant wealth All hail

A lioness art thou Bring the gods hither for him
who offers sacrifice All hail

To living creatures, thee²

¹ From the commentators we gather that during the Soma sacrifice with these four invocations the Adhvaryu poured butter on the four corners of the altar place and with the fifth on the centre. *Thou* in the first lines is the altar.

² *Thce* the offering ladle *I raise* ' is understood

THE ATHARVA-VEDA

[MUCH of the Atharva-veda is directly derived from the Rig-veda. For instance the sixth hymn in Book xiv is the Purusa Sūkta, the ninetieth hymn of Book x of the Rig-veda. Such hymns are of course not characteristic of the beliefs in magic of many kinds probably largely developed by intercourse with the demon-worshipping aborigines which is one of the chief features of the deterioration of the earlier Aryan faith. A few of these spells and prayers are quoted here.]

A spell against Fever

[The tribes mentioned in these verses seem to be hostile or alien tribes who lived on the borders of the lands in which the Aryans dwelt.]

1 Hence, filled with holy strength let Agni,
Soma, and Varuna, the Press-stone and the Altar,
And Grass, and glowing Fuel banish Fever,
Let hateful things stay at a distance yonder

2 And thou thyself who makest all men yellow,
consuming them with burning heat like Agni,

Thou, Fever! then be weak and ineffective.
Pass hence into realms below or vanish

7 Go, Fever, to the Mūjavans, or farther, to the
Bahlikas

Seek a lascivious Śūdra girl and seem to shake
her through and through

8 Go hence and eat thy kinsmen the Mahāvṛishas
and Mūjavans

These or those foreign regions we proclaim to
Fever for his home.

12 Go Fever, with Consumption thy brother, and
with thy sister Cough,

And with thy nephew Herpes, go away unto
that alien folk

13 Chase Fever whether cold or hot, brought by
the summer or the rains,

Tertian intermittent, or autumnal or continual

14 We to Gandhāris, Mūjavans, to Angas and to
Māgadhas

Hand over Fever as it were a servant and
a thing of price.

Atharvaveda v 22 1 2 7 8 12 13 14

Amulets

[An amulet is some object supposed to have magic powers,
worn as a remedy or preservative against evils or mischief such as
diseases or witchcraft. Plants were often used as amulets such
as *Arundhati* a medicinal climbing plant the *Asvattha* the
pipal or sacred fig-tree. The *horn* of the roebuck was employed
to drive away hereditary disease. *Lead* was used as a charm
against diseases and sorcery. The following non metrical formula
describes the power of an amulet.]

- 1 Power art thou, give me power All hail'
- 2 Might art thou, give me might All hail'
- 3 Strength art thou, give me strength All hail'
- 4 Life art thou, give me life All hail'
- 5 Ear art thou give me hearing Hail'
- 6 Eye art thou, give me eyes All hail'
- 7 Shield art thou, shield me well All hail'

Atharvaveda vi 17

A prayer against him who robs a Brahman
of his cow

5 Of the Kshatriya who taketh to himself this
Brahman's cow and oppreseth the Brahman,

6 The glory, the heroism, and the favouring fortune depart

7. The energy and vigour, the power and might, the speech and mental strength, the glory and duty, 8 devotion and princely sway, kingship and people, brilliance and honour, and splendour and wealth

11 All these blessings of a Kshatriya depart from him when he oppresseth the Brahman and taketh to himself the Brahman's cow

17 Therefore the Brahmans' cow is held inviolable by the wise .

65 So, Goddess's cow, do thou from him, the Brahman's tyrant, criminal, niggard, blasphemer of the gods

66 With hundred-knotted thunderbolt, sharpened and edged with razor blades,

67 Strike off the shoulders and the head

68 Snatch thou the hair from off his head, and from his body strip the skin

69 Tear out his sinews, cause his flesh to fall in pieces from his frame

70. Crush thou his bones together, strike and beat the marrow out of him

71 Dislocate all his limbs and joints.

72 From earth let the carnivorous Agni drive him, let Vāyu burn him from mid-air's broad region,

73. From heaven let Sūrya drive him and consume him.

Atharva-veda XII, 51

A merchant's prayer for success in business

[The prayer is primarily addressed to the 'Merchant Indra,' who sells blessings to those who make offerings to him Vasiṣṭhānara and Jātavedas are epithets applied to Agni]

1 I stir and animate the merchant Indra may he approach and be our guide and leader

Chasing ill will, wild beast, and highway robber, may he who hath the power give me riches

2 The many paths which gods are wont to travel, the paths which go between the earth and heaven,

May they rejoice with me in milk and fatness that I may make rich profit by my purchase.

3 With fuel, Agni¹ and with butter, longing, mine offering I present for strength and conquest,

With prayer, so far as I have strength, adoring—this holy hymn to gain a hundred treasures

4 Pardon this stubbornness of ours, O Agni, the distant pathway which our feet have trodden

Propitious unto us be sale and barter, may interchange of merchandise enrich me

Accept, ye twain, accordant, this libation! Prosperous be our ventures and incomings

5. The wealth wherewith I carry on my traffic, seeking, ye gods! wealth with the wealth I offer,

May this grow more for me, not less O Agni, through sacrifice chase those away who hinder profit!

6 The wealth wherewith I carry on my traffic, seeking, ye gods! wealth with the wealth I offer

Herein may Indra, Savitar, and Soma, Prajāpati and Agni give me splendour

7 With reverence we sing thy praise, O Hotar-priest Vaiśvānara ('dear to all men')

Over our children keep thou watch, over our bodies, kine, and lives

8 Still to thee ever will we bring oblation, as to a stabled horse, O Jātavedas

Joying in food and in the growth of riches may we thy servants, Agni, never suffer

Atharva-veda iii 15.

A Woman's Love Charm

1 This is the Apsarases' love spell, the conquering resistless ones'

Send the spell forth, ye Deities ! Let him consume with love of me

2. I pray, may he remember me, think of me, loving and beloved

Send forth the spell, ye Deities ! let him consume with love of me

3 That he may think of me, that I may never, never think of him

Send forth the spell, ye Deities ! Let him consume with love of me

4 Madden him, Maruts, madden him Madden him, madden him, O Air

Madden him, Agni, madden him Let him consume with love of me

Atharva veda vi 130.

APPENDIX I

TRADITIONS CONCERNING THE ORIGIN OF THE VEDAS

THE painstaking research of Dr John Muir has made the theories of the origin of the Vedas contained in the Sacred Books of the Hinduism accessible to every student. They are set forth with the Sanskrit passages on which they are founded or in which they are expressed in the third volume of his *Original Sanskrit Texts*.

It is impossible to discuss all these theories here, or to quote all the passage bearing on them. A careful selection of the most important is all that can be attempted here.

Traditions in the Hymns

There are comparatively few statements in the Vedas that give any hint of the history of the writers of the Vedic Hymns or of the conditions in which their ancestors had entered into and settled in north-west India. But the name of the author of each Hymn is preserved in the *Anukramanī* or index to the contents of each Veda which has been handed down from very ancient times. The defenders of the eternity of the Vedic Hymns argue that these rishis were not and do not really claim to be the authors of the Hymns which are said to be their words (Muir, *Sanskrit Texts*, III. 85).

but that they merely repeated the Hymns and other parts of the Vedas that they had 'seen'.

Consideration of the words of the rishis will, however, show that they distinctly speak of themselves as the authors of the Hymns, without any reference to any supernatural inspiration, and that they uttered the Hymns before an artificial dogma had as yet begun to assign a mysterious divinity to the Hymns to secure sanctions for the elaborate system of priestcraft described in the Brāhmanas.

Dr Muir has arranged the sayings of the rishis in which they claim to be actual authors of the Hymns in three classes, according to the Sanskrit verb which used to express the idea. These verbs are three

Kṛi, to make
Takṣh, to fabricate
Jan, to beget, generate or produce

The verb *Kṛi* is very frequently used. Its meaning is to do, to make, to manufacture, prepare, work at, build, construct or compose, and the rishis used it in this sense of the Hymns that they had composed. There is no suggestion that they considered that they were merely repeating what had existed from eternity in the minds of the Gods.

Four examples may be given
Kanvāso vām brahma kṛinvanti adhvare teshām
su śṛnutam havam |
'The Kanvas make a prayer to you hear well their invocation'

Evā te hariyojanā suvriktī Indra brahmāni Gota-
śah akran |

Rig veda 1 47. 2

‘Thus O Indra, yoker of steeds, have the Gotamas made hymns for thee efficaciously ’

Rig veda 1 61 16

*Etām vām Aśvinā vardhanāni brahma stomam
Gritsamadāsah akran |*

‘These magnifying prayers, [this] hymn, O Aśvins, the Gritsamadas have made for you ’

Rig veda 11 39 8

*Adha priyam śūsham Indrāya manma brahmakrito
Vṛihadukthād avāchi |*

‘An acceptable and powerful hymn has been uttered to Indra by Vṛihaduktha, maker of hymns ’

Rig veda 1 54 6

The verb *Taksh* is less common. It means to form by cutting, or by the plane or chisel, to chop, slice, fashion out of wood as a carpenter does, and so to form in the mind or invent. *Takshaka* and *Takshan* (*Tassan* in Tamil) are two Sanskrit names for a carpenter. From this it will be seen that by using this verb the ṛishi thinks of himself as the inventor or maker of the Hymns that he utters just as the carpenter is the maker of a cart or a plough. There is here again no suggestion of the later tradition.

Two passages will be sufficient as examples

*Sanāyate Gotamah Indra navyam atakshad brahma
hariyojanāya ityādi |*

‘Nodhas, descendant of Gotama, fashioned this new hymn for [thee] Indra ’

Rig-veda 1 62 13

*Etam te stomam tuvi-jāta vipro ratham na dhīrah
svapāhi ataksham |*

‘I, a sage, have fabricated this hymn for thee, O powerful [deity], as a skilful workman fashions a car’

Rig-veda 2 11

The verb *Jat* means to generate or beget and there are many passages in which the rishis used this simile. However later tradition may interpret the phrase it indicates that the vedic poets fully believed that they themselves were the authors of the Hymns that they sung.

There is no need to quote many passages.

*Nayan tu stonam Agnaye divah śyenāya jījanam
vastat | kutid vanāti nah |*

‘I have generated a new hymn to Agni, the falcon of the sky, will he not bestow on us wealth in abundance?’

Rig-veda vii 15 4

Sutrikim Idrāya brahma jatayanta viprāhi |

‘The sages generated an efficacious production and a prayer for Indra’

Rig-veda vii 31 11.

*Asmat te pratiharyate Jātavedo vicharshane Agne
janāmi sushtutam |*

‘Wise Agni Jatavedas, I generate a hymn for thee who receivest it with favour’

Rig-veda viii 43 2.

Other verbs are used with similar import to convey the idea that the rishi is the maker of the Hymn.

Asmat id u stomam samhinomi ratham na tashtā ityādi |

‘To him (Indra) I send forth a hymn, as a carpenter a car’

Rig-veda i 61 4

The following passage shows most clearly that the authors of the Hymns recognized the part that their own minds played in the composition of Hymns

*Imam stomam arhate Jātavedasc ratham ita sam
mahema manīshayā | bhadrū hi nah pramatir asya
samisadi Agne sakhye mā rishāma ityam tava |*

‘Let us with our intellect construct (or send forth) like a car, this hymn for the adorable Jātavedas, for his wisdom is favourable to us in the assembly Agni in thy friendship may we never suffer’

Rig-veda i 94 1

The idea that the hymns were altogether their own work seems however always foreign to the rishis

Some hymns ask for or acknowledge divine assistance just as poets of all nations often do One poet says

*Indra mrīṭa mahyam jīvātum ichcha chodāya
dhayam ayaso na dhārām | Yat kincha aham tvāyur
idam vadāmi taj jushasva kridhi mā deva antam |*

‘O God (Indra), have mercy, give me my daily bread, sharpen my mind, like the edge of an iron instrument Whatever I now may utter, longing for thee, do thou accept it, give me divine protection’

Rig-veda vi 47 10

Direct divine inspiration is asserted

*Sa pratinathā Kavi-vridhah Indro itakasya itak-
shanah |*

‘Indra was of old the promoter of the poet, and the augments of the song’

Rig-veda viii 52 4

From these, and from many other passages it may fairly be reasoned that at the time when the Hymns were

composed their authors while considering themselves as rendering service specially pleasing to the Gods by composing Hymns, certainly considered those Hymns to be their own work

One notable text in the Rīg-veda which refers to the creation of the Vedas occurs in the Tenth Book in the well known Ninetieth Hymn called the Purusa Sūkta. The Tenth Book is generally believed to contain Hymns of much later date than the preceding Books so that there is reason to doubt whether a tradition in the Purusa Sūkta is to be taken as of very ancient authority. Professor Macdonell says it is one of the very latest poems of the Rīgvedic age, for it presupposes a knowledge of the three Vedas, to which it refers by their names, and it also mentions the four castes. It describes the creation of the universe by the gods out of the body of a primeval giant with a thousand heads. 'The act of creation is treated as a sacrificial rite, the original man being conceived as a victim, the parts of which when cut up become portions of the universe. His head, we are told, became the sky, his navel the air, his feet the earth, while from his mind sprang the Moon, from his eye the Sun, from his breath the wind' ¹

The Hymn has been quoted in full on pages 165-6. The verse that relates to the origin of the Vedas states that the Rīg, Sāma and Yajur Vedas were born from the sacrifice. It does not mention the Atharva-veda.

Tasmād yajñāt sarvā-hataḥ richaḥ sāmāni jajñire |
chandāmsi jajñire tasmād yajus tasmād ajayata |

¹ MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p 133

‘From that universal sacrifice were born the Rich and Saman verses the metres were born from it the Yajush was created’

Rig veda x 90 9

New and Old Hymns

Dr Muir quotes more than fifty passages to show that the authors of the Vedic hymns themselves recognized that some hymns were new and some were old This alone proves that the tradition of the eternity of these hymns had no place in the thought of the Vedic poets themselves It will be sufficient to quote one or two of these verses

The ṛishis believed that the Gods would be better pleased if their praises were celebrated in new, and perhaps more elaborate compositions, than if older and possibly ruder, prayers had been repeated

*Sa nah stavānah ābhara gāyatreṇa navīyasa |
rayim vīravatīm iśam |*

‘Glorified by our newest hymn, do thou bring to us wealth and food with progeny’

Rig veda i 12 11

*Tān pūrvayā uvīdā hūmahe vayam Bhagam Mitran
Aditīm Dakshan Asridham ityādi |*

‘We invoke with an ancient hymn Bhaga Mitra, Aditi, Daksha, Asridh’

Rig veda i 89 3

*Yah pūrvyābhur uta nūtanābhur gīrbhur vāṇīdhe
grinatām rishīnām |*

‘He (Indra) who grew though the ancient and modern hymns of lauding ṛishis’

Rig veda vi 44 13

*Ā sakhāyah subardughām dhenum ajadhvam upa
navyasā vachah |*

‘Friends, drive hither the milch cow with a new hymn’

Rig-veda vi 48 11

*Nu navyase navīyase sūktāya sādahaya pathāh |
pratna-vad rochaya ruchah |*

‘Prepare (O Soma) the paths for our newest, most recent hymn, and, as of old, cause the lights to shine’

Rig-veda ix 9 8

Traditions in the Atharva-veda

Several traditions find expression in the hymns of the Atharva veda

i The seventh hymn of the tenth maṇḍala of the Atharva-veda in a somewhat similar way to the Purusa Sūkta of the Rig veda identifies Skambha with the universe and describes all things as derived from him. All four vedas are mentioned in it

*Yasmād richo apātakshan yajur yasmād apāka-
shan | sāmāni yasya lomāni atharvāṅgiraso muk-
ham | Skambham tam brūhi katamahi svid eva sah |*

‘Declare who is that Skambha from whom they cut off the Rich verses, from whom they scraped off the Yajush, of whom the Sāman verses are the hairs, and the verses of the Atharvan and the Angiras the mouth’

Atharva veda x 7 20

ii The seventh hymn of the eleventh maṇḍala of the Atharva-veda is a glorification of Uchchhishṭa, the ‘residue of sacrifice’ It states that the Vedas sprung from the ‘Leavings of Sacrifice’

*Richah sāmāni chhandān.sī purānam jajushā saha |
Uchchlushtāj jayure sarā diti detāh diti sritah |*

‘ From the leavings of the sacrifice sprung the Rich and Saman verses, the metres, the Purana with the Yajush, and all the gods who dwell in the sky ’

Atharrva veda xi 7 2+

iii Another tradition in the same Veda says that the Vedas sprung from Indra, and he sprung from them

Sa vai rigbhyo ajāyata tasmād richo ajāyanta |

'Indra sprung from the Rich verses, the Rich verses sprung from him'

Atharva-veda viii + 38

iv A verse in a later book states that the Vedas sprung from Time

Kālād richah sambharan jaguh kālād aṣṣata |

'From Time the Rich verses sprung, the Yajush
sprung from Time'

Atharrta vedu vii 54 3

Traditions in the Brahmanas

It is impossible to say definitely at what dates the various Brāhmanas were composed. Both they and the Atharva-veda belong to the same period and both are much later than the Rīg-veda. The period when the Brāhmanas were composed may however with some reason be said to end about 600 B C, but, of course, they contain traditions earlier than that date.

1 The Taittirīya Brāhmana closely connected with the text of the Black (Kṛṣṇa) Yajur-veda, is one of the earliest Brāhmanas, while the Satapatha Brāhmana is of later date, perhaps one of the latest of them¹ One or

two quotations from them will show the character of the beliefs concerning the origin of the Vedas that had become current during the Brāhmanic period and that were embodied in and endorsed by them

ii Two passages may be cited from the Taittirīya Brāhmana. The first is a eulogy of Vāch, the goddess of speech. She is declared to be the mother of the Vedas

*Vāg aksharam prathamajā ritasya vedānām mātā
amritasya nābhīh | sū no jushānā upa yajnam āgād
āvantī devī suhavā me astu | yām rishayo mantra-krito
manishinah anvaichhan devās tapasā sramena |*

‘Vāch is an imperishable thing and the first-born of the ceremonial, the mother of the Vedas, and the centre-point of immortality. Delighting in us, she came to the sacrifice. May the protecting goddess be ready to listen to my invocation—she whom the wise rishis, the composers of hymns, the gods, sought by austere fervour and by laborious devotion

Taittirīya Brāhmana ii 8 8 5

iii The other passage is an example of the grotesque symbolism that surprises the reader of the Sacred Books. It states that the Vedas are the hair of Prajapati's beard

Prājāpater vai etāni śmaśrūni yad vedah |

Taittirīya Brāhmana iii 3 9 1

iv Of the two passages quoted here from the later Śatapatha Brāhmana, the first is interesting for the figure of speech and for its assertion that the Vedas were dug from the mind-ocean by the labour of the gods, the

devas, who are not of supreme rank. In the other passage the Vedas are called the breathings of the Great Being and classed with works like the *sūtras* which are generally considered to be merely human compositions (*paurosheya*) without independent authority

*Mano vai samudrah | manaso vai samudrād vāchā
'bhryā devās trayīm vidhyām nirakhanan |*

‘Mind is the Ocean. From the mind ocean, with speech for a shovel, the gods dug out the triple Vedic science’

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa vii 5 2 52

*Sa yathā ārdredhāgner abhyāhitāt prithag dhūmāh
viniścharanti evam vai are 'sya mahato bhūtasya
nisvasitam etad yad rigvedo yajurvedah sāmavedo
'tharvāṅgīrasah itihāsah purānam vidyā upanishadah
ślokāḥ sūtrāṇy anuvyākhyānāni vyākhyānāni asyaiva
etāni sarvāni nisvasitāni |*

‘As from a fire made of moist wood various modifications of smoke proceed, so is the breathing of this Great Being the Rig veda, the Yajur-veda, the Sāma-veda, the Atharvāṅgīrasas, the Itihāsas, Purānas, Science, the Upanishads, Slokas, aphorisms, comments of different kinds—all these are his breathings’

Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa xiv 5 4 10

Traditions in the Upanishads

The earlier Upanishads were composed approximately between 600 and 480 B C. The teaching in them is generally philosophic. The traditions of the past are used to illustrate metaphysical ideas, and are repeated as

symbolic of esoteric truth. Thus in the Chhândogya Upanishad Prajāpati is said to have produced the three Vedas through the fire, the wind and the light of the sun.

*Prajāpatir lokān abhyatapat | tśhām tapyamānā-
nām rasān prābrihad agnim prithivyāh vāyūm anta-
rikshād ādityam divah | sa etās tisro devatāh abhya-
tapat | tāsām tapyamānānām rasān prābrihad agner
richo yāyor yajumshu sāma ādityāt | sa etām trayīm
vidyām abhyatapat | tasyās tapyamānāyāh rasān prā-
brihad bhūi iti rigbhyo bhuvah iti yajurbhyah svar iti
sāmabhyah |*

‘Prajāpati infused warmth into the worlds, and from them so heated he drew forth their essences, viz Agni (fire) from the earth, Vāyu (wind) from the air, and Sūrya (the sun) from the sky. He infused warmth into these three deities, and from them so heated he drew forth their essences,—from Agni the Rich verses, from Vāyu the Yajush verses, and from Sūrya the Sāman verses. He then infused heat into this triple science and from it so heated he drew forth its essences,—from Rich verses the syllable *bhūh*, from Yajush verses, *bhuvah*, and from Sāman verses *svah*.’

Chhândogya Upanishad iv 17 1, 3.

Manu's account

Manu assigns the same origin to the Vedas in his account of creation.

*Sarveshām tu sa nāmāni karmāni cha prithak
prithak | Veda-śabdebhya evādan prithak samsthās
cha nirmame | karmātmanam cha devānām so 'srijat
prānnām prabhuh | sādhyānām cha ganam sūkshmanam*

*yajnam chaiva sanātanam | Agni vāyu-ravibhyas tu
trayam brahma sanātanam | dudoha yajna-siddhyar-
tham ṛig-yajuh-sāma-lakshanam |*

‘He (Brahmā) in the beginning fashioned from the words of the Veda the several names, functions and separate conditions of all [creatures] That Lord also created the subtle host of active and living deities, and of Sādhyas, and eternal sacrifice And, in order to the performance of sacrifice, he drew forth from Agni, from Vāyu, and from Sūrya, the triple eternal Veda, distinguished as Rich, Yajush and Sāman ’

Mānava dharma-sāstra 1 26, 23

The Mahabharata

Sarasvatī may be said to have taken the place of Vāch in later Hindu mythology, and the Mahābhārata calls *Sarasvatī the mother of the Vedas*

*Vedānām mātaram paśya mat-sthām devīm Saras-
vatīm |*

Behold Sarasvatī, mother of the Vedas, abiding in me

Mahābhārata, Śānti-parva 12 920.

The Harivamsa

The Harivamsa, the nineteenth or supplementary book of the Mahābhārata, gives a different tradition

The Gāyatrī, quoted on page 186, is the most famous of Hindu prayers It is repeated to this day by every Brahman in India in his morning prayers All kinds of mystic properties are ascribed to the Gāyatrī, and the Harivamsa contains a verse which states that the Vedas were produced from the Gāyatrī

*Tato 'srijad vai triṣadāṁ gāyatrīm veda-mātaram |
Akaroḥ chaiva chaturo vedān gāyatrī-sambhavān |*

After framing the world, Brahmā 'next created the Gāyatrī of three lines, mother of the Vedas, and also the four Vedas which sprung from the Gāyatrī'

Harivamsa 11, 516

Statements in the Puranas

The Puranas give different accounts of the origin of the Vedas, in harmony with later developments of Hinduism. For instance, in one passage the Vishnu Purāṇa identifies the three Vedas, omitting the Atharva-veda, with Vishnu

*Sa riṣi-mayah sa sāmamayah sa chātmā sa
yajurmayah | rig-yajuh-sāmā-sāṁsātmā sa evātmā śarī-
rīnām |*

'He is composed of the Rich, of the Sāman, of the Yajush, he is the soul, consisting of the essence of the Rich, Yajush and Sāman, he is the soul of embodied spirits'

Vishnu Purāṇa III 3 19

On the other hand, the Bhāgavata Purāṇa says in one place that the Vedas issued from the mouth of Brahmā the Creator

*Kadāchid dhyāyataḥ śashtur vedāḥ āsamś chatu-
mukhāt | katham śrakshyāmy aham lokān samavetān
yathā purā | Rig-yajuh-sāmā tharvākhyān vedān
pūrvādibhir mukhaiḥ | śastīam 1jyām stuti-stomam
prāyaschittam vyadhāt kramāt*

'Once the Vedas sprung from the four-faced Creator, as he was meditating "how shall I create the aggregate

worlds as before? ” He formed from his eastern and other mouths the Vedas called R̥ich, Yajush, Saman and Atharvan, together with praise, sacrifice, hymns, and expiation ’

Bhāgavata Purāṇa in 12, 34 and 37

The *Vishnu Purāṇa* (1 5, 48ff) gives the same explanation, with details as to the particular mouth of Brahmā by which each Veda was uttered

APPENDIX II

THE METRES OF THE VEDAS

WHILE Greek Prosody makes the 'foot' the unit in its metrical systems, and while in later Sanskrit the quantity of every syllable in each line was fixed in all metres Vedic prosody is less formal. The Vedic 'foot' or 'pāda' like the foot of a quadruped, means a quarter-verse because the ordinary Vedic verse contains four lines¹. A pāda may have eight, eleven or twelve syllables. The *Rich* is a stanza generally formed of three or four lines. There are altogether fifteen different metres, but only seven are at all common. As a rule the whole of one hymn is in the same metre throughout, but sometimes different parts of a hymn are in verses of different metres. One hymn in Book I contains verses in nine different metres.

As regards quantity the first syllables of the line are not defined strictly, but generally, though not always, the last four syllables are of fixed length. In the eight and twelve syllable verses these syllables are iambic (short and long) and trochaic (long and short) in lines of eleven syllables.

Max Müller gives a list, according to Śaunaka, of the metres employed in the Rīg veda. The number of verses in which the principal occur are as follows

¹ MACDONELL, *Sanskrit Literature*, p. 55. *Vedic Index*, i. 516

Trishtubh 4255 : Gāyatrī 2451 Jaguī 1,348 Anu-
stubh 855 Ushanī 341 Panku 312 various, 849.
total 10409

Arctic Sanskrit L. 1. 1. 1. p. 22

Examples of one or two of the most common forms will be of interest to the student

The Gāyatrī—This is a common metre one-fourth of the Rig-veda being in this metre. It is so called because the Gāyatrī the most sacred text in the Vedas, is composed in it. It contains three lines of eight syllables. The first hymn is in this metre. The following is the first verse

Agī 1 tē pīrāi tē
Yajñasya dātā rātāi
Hōdāra rātā dātā an

Macdonell renders this verse in lines closely resembling the original

'I praise Agni domestic priest
God minister of sacrifice,
Herald most prodigal of wealth

Anushtubh—This contains four lines of eight syllables each like the three lines of the Gāyatrī. It is now generally called the *Sloka* and in post Vedic times took the place of the Gāyatrī. The following is an example.

Srīstī tē o ī aśustē
Devā Agī rātā dātā
Tāt rātā dātā gātā
Trayastīrī sātā dātā

'Agni the wise gods lend an ear to their worshipper.
God with the ruddy steeds who lovest praise bring
hither those three and thirty

Trishtubh —About two-fifths of the R̥g-veda are composed in the Trishtubh metre. It consists of four lines of eleven syllables. The name means three steps, one short and two long. The following is an example

Anārambhanctad avīrayethām

Anāsthāne agriabhane samudre |

Yad aśvinā ūhuthur Bhujyum astām

Śatāritrām nāvam ātasthrvāmsam |

‘Ye put forth your vigour in the ocean, which offers no stay, or standing place, or support, when he bore Bhujyu to his home, standing on a ship propelled by a hundred oars’

R̥g-veda 1. 116. 5

Jagati —This metre of four twelve-syllable lines is said to ‘express the idea of cattle. Any one who wishes for wealth in cattle must use it’. Example

Na tam rājānāv adite kutaś chana na

Amho aśnoti duritam naku bhayam |

Yam Asvinā suhavā rudiavarttanī

Puroratham krinuthah patnya saha |

‘Neither distress, nor calamity, nor fear, O ye two kings, whom none may check or stay, from any quarter assails the man whom ye Asvins, swift to hear, along with (your) wife, cause to lead the van in his car’

R̥g-veda 1. 39. 11

The Aryan had a firm belief in the power of the rightly pronounced prayer to secure its aim. This appears in the way in which the gods are addressed in some of the hymns. It also underlies the worship of the goddess Vāch. As the more elaborate system of Brahmanical Hinduism arose a complete science of the mysterious values of the various metres used in the hymns was formulated.

In his introduction to that Brāhmanas Dr Haug summarizes the teaching of the Brāhmanas on the subject. He points out that the power of the Hotṛi priest at a sacrifice lay in his being able to use the sacred words frequently personified by Vāch. The sacred words, pronounced rightly by the Hotṛi priest, effect, by the innate power of Vāch, the spiritual birth of the sacrificer, shape his body, secure heaven for him, cause him to live a hundred years, and procure him wealth and offspring, will slay his enemies and destroy the consequences of his sins. But pronounced against a man by the priest or his enemies words will curse him unless he finds other words more powerful to counteract the hostile spell. This influence lies mainly in the form or metre in which the given words are uttered, hence the importance of metre, terms and words. Each metre is specially influential in the securing of some particular boon.

The Gāyatrī metre is the most sacred, and is the proper metre for Agni, the God of fire, and chaplain of the gods. It expresses the idea of Brahmā therefore the sacrificer must use it when he wishes anything closely connected with Brahmā, such as acquirement of sacred knowledge, and the thorough understanding of all problems of theology. The Trishtubh expresses the idea of strength and royal power, thence it is the proper metre by which Indra, the king of the gods, is to be invoked. Any one wishing to obtain strength and royal power, especially a Kshattriya, must use it. A variety of it, the Ushnih metre of twenty eight syllables, is to be employed by a sacrificer who aspires for longevity, for 'twenty-eight' is the symbol of life. The Jagatī expresses the idea of cattle. He who wishes for wealth in

cattle, must use it. The same idea (or that of the sacrifice) is expressed by the Pankti metre (five times eight syllables). The Brihat, which consists of thirty-six syllables, is to be used when a sacrificer is aspiring to fame and renown, for this metre is the exponent of those ideas. The Anushtubh is the symbol of the celestial world, thence he who seeks a place in heaven should make his prayer in it. The Viraj, of thirty syllables, is food and satisfaction, thence one who wishes for abundance of food, must employ it.

Thus the Āitareyā Brāhmaṇa says

‘He who wishes for long life, should use two verses in the *Ushnih* metre, for *Ushnih* is life. He who having such a knowledge uses two *Ushnihs* arrives at his full age (i.e. one hundred years).

‘He who desires heaven should use two *Anushtubhs*. There are sixty-four syllables in two *Anushtubhs*. Each of these three worlds (earth, air, and sky) contains twenty-one places, one rising above the other (just as the steps of a ladder). By twenty one steps he ascends to each of these worlds severally, by taking the sixty-fourth step he stands firm in the celestial world. He who having such a knowledge uses two *Anushtubhs* gains a footing (in the celestial world).

‘He who desires strength should use two *Trishtubhs*. *Trishtubh* is strength, vigour, and sharpness of senses. He who knowing this, uses two *Trishtubhs*, becomes vigorous, endowed with sharp senses and strong.

‘He who desires cattle should use two *Jagatis*. Cattle are *Jagati* like. He who knowing this uses two *Jagatis*, becomes rich in cattle.’

APPENDIX III

VEDIC SANSKRIT

WHETHER the Vedic hymns present to us the language of the early Aryans as they actually used it in their daily speech, or whether it was a refined poetical dialect even in early days, as was classical Sanskrit assuredly in later times, there is not sufficient evidence to decide. Probably neither assertion is altogether true. Some of the hymns are nearer to the actual life of the people than others, more speculative, can be. In some there are what seem to be thoroughly colloquial expressions. Others are the carefully expressed utterances of thinkers who have followed generations of thinkers.

On one point however, there can be no doubt. Generally speaking the language of the Vedas represents a stage in which Sanskrit is still very like the language of the old Persian Avesta, a stage in which the Arvans of Iran and the Aryans of the Panjab have still much in common in their speech. And the language of the Indian Aryans is simpler, more direct, less trammelled by grammatical conventions than the Sanskrit of later days.

The subject has been carefully investigated by Sanskrit grammarians, both European and Indians. The greatest of Indian Sanskrit grammarians Pāṇini constantly recognizes differences between the ancient and the more modern dialects.

Muir¹ gives the following among other examples of the differences of Vedic from later Sanskrit

Vedic Text

*Vāyav āyāhi darśata ime somāh arankṛtāh | teshām
pāhi śrudhi havam||*

Modern Sanskrit

*Vāyav āyāhi darśanīya ime somāh arankṛtāh—
teshām piba srinu havam||*

‘Come, O Vayu, these somas are prepared Drink
of them, hear our invocation’

Rig-veda 1 2 1

Here it will be observed that four Vedic words darśata, arankṛtāh, pāhi, śrudhi, differ from the modern Sanskrit forms

The student will also find it useful to consult P Peterson's *Hymns from the Rig-veda*, Bombay, 1900

¹ MUIR, *Sanskrit Texts*, vol II, p 205

APPENDIX IV

THE CONTENTS OF THE RIG VEDA

ANCIENT scholars most carefully enumerated in systematic indexes, called Anukramanīs, the number of verses, the poets, the deities and the metres of every hymn in the Vedas

As early as about 600 B C every verse, every word, every syllable had been carefully counted. The number of verses in the Rīg-veda varies from 10,402 to 10,622, that of the *padās* or words, is 153,826, that of the syllables, 432,000

In the ordinary recension of the Rīg-veda, that of the Śākālas there are 1,017 hymns, with eleven supplementary hymns called Vālakhilyas added to the Eighth Book

The recension of the Vāshkalas seems to have been the same as that of the Śākālas, but contained eight additional hymns, bringing up the total to 1,025

Max Müller gives the following statistics for the Rīg-veda from Saunaka's Anukramanī —

Books (Mandalas)		Sub sections (Anuvākas)		Hymns (Sūktas)	
The	1st	contains	24	and	191
„	2nd	,	4	,	43
,	3rd		5		62
,	4th		5		58
	5th		6		87
	6th	,	6	,	75

Books (Māṇḍalas)			Sub sections (Anuvākas)		Hymns (Sūktas)
The	7th	contains	6	and	104
„	8th	„	10	„	92 (+ 11 Vālakh- ilyas)
„	9th	„	7	„	114
„	10th	„	12	„	191
The 10 have			85	and	1017 + 11 = 1028

MANDALA I

This is called the book of the Śatarchinś, that is of a hundred or a large indefinite number of authors of verses

Of the hymns forty-four are specially addressed to Indra, forty-three to Agni, fifteen to the Aśvins, eleven to the Maruts, nine to the Viśvedevas, four each to Ushas and the R̥ibhus, three to Heaven and Earth, etc. Other hymns are addressed to gods conjointly, as Indra and Agni, Mitra and Varuna. Two hymns are addressed to the Horse, one is in praise of Food

MANDALA II

This book contains only forty three hymns. It is commonly called the Book of Gṛtsamada, as nearly all the hymns are ascribed to that Rishi

Fourteen of the hymns are addressed to Indra, two of them in the form of the Kāpinjala, a kind of partridge, and nine to Agni

MANDALA III

This book contains sixty-two hymns, ascribed to the rishi Viśvāmitra, or to members of his family. It is

said that he was born a Kshatriya, but by virtue of his intense austerities he raised himself to the Brahman caste

The rishis who wrote the hymns were not always friendly with one another 'Especially prominent,' says Weber, 'is the enmity between the families of Vasistha and Viśvāmitra, which runs through all Vedic antiquity, continues to play an important part in the epic, and is kept up to the latest times, so that, for example, a commentator of the Veda who claims to be descended from Vasistha, leaves passages unpounded in which the latter is stated to have had a curse imprecated upon him'

MANDALA IV

This book contains fifty-eight hymns The first forty-one are ascribed to the rishi Vāmadeva, son of Gotama, so also are the last fourteen Twelve are addressed specially to Indra, and eleven to Agni

MANDALA V

This book contains eighty seven hymns Of these twenty one are addressed to Agni, eleven to Mitra and Varuna, nine each to Indra, the Maruts and Viśvedevas, and six to the Aśvins

MANDALA VI

The rishi of this book is Bharadvāja, to whom, with few exceptions, all the hymns are attributed It contains seventy five hymns To Indra twenty one hymns are

addressed, to Agni, thirteen, to Pūshan, five, to the Viśvedevas, four

MANDALA VII

All the hymns of this book are ascribed to the rishi Vasistha, with whom his sons are associated as the seers of parts of two hymns. There are 104 hymns, of which fourteen are addressed to Indra, thirteen to Agni, eight to the Āsins, seven each to Ushas and the Viśvedevas, four to Varuna, and one to frogs. The prevailing metre is Trishtubh.

MANDALA VIII

This book is by a variety of authors. It contains ninety-two hymns, with eleven called Vālakhilya or supplementary hymns. Of the hymns thirty-six are addressed to Indra, eleven to Agni, five to the Viśvedevas, and three to the Maruts.

MANDALA IX

This book contains 114 hymns. Except one to the Āpris and two in which Soma is invoked conjointly, all the hymns are addressed to Soma. Even in the hymn to the Āpris the attributes of Agni are transferred to Soma. He is addressed as Pavamāna, representing the juice as it flows through the wool which was used to strain it and thus purify it. The hymns were intended to be sung while this process is going on. There are very many repetitions in the book.

MANDALA X

This book contains 191 hymns To Indra thirty four are addressed, to Agni twenty five, to the Visvedevas twenty-two There are hymns on creation and several to be used as charms to cure sickness, to remove rivals, to prevent miscarriage, etc The book includes some of the latest hymns in the Rîg veda Several of the hymns are ascribed to gods, as if the real authors wished by this device to conceal their late origin

APPENDIX V

CONTENTS OF THE SĀMA-VEDA

IT is not possible to present any summarised statement of the contents of the Sāma-veda as the hymns are arranged entirely for ritual purposes as they were to be chanted by the Udgātar priests at the Soma sacrifices and no order of subjects is observed. The text is divided into two parts, the first containing six books, the latter eight.

APPENDIX VI

THE CONTENTS OF THE YAJUR VEDA

THE White Yajur veda, or collection of hymns for the use of the Adhvaryu priests, as given in the recension known as the White Yajur-veda, or Vājasaneyā consists of forty books. Almost half are taken from the Rīg veda or Atharva-veda and are metrical. Nearly equal in quantity are the Yajus texts, or sacrificial formulae, composed in prose and long passages, such as the lists of victims to be dedicated at the Aśvamedha and the Purusamedha which are in the simplest prose.

Books I and II contain the texts and formulae required at the New and Full Moon Sacrifices. Book III those for the morning and evening oblation of milk, Books IV-VIII those for Soma sacrifices in general, Books IX-X for Vājapeya or Cup of Victory and the Rājasūya or Inauguration of a king, two variations of the Soma sacrifice.

Books XI-XVIII give formulae for the constructions of altars or hearths for the various sacrificial fires, Books XIX-XX those for the sacrifice instituted to expiate the evil effect of excessive soma drinking, the Sauterimani, Books XXII-XXV contain the formulae for the Aśvamedha. Books XXVI-XXIX contain supplementary formulae for the sacrifices already dealt with.

Books XXX and XXXI treat of the Human sacrifice, the Purusamedha. Books XXXII-XXXIV deal with the Sarvamedha sacrifice for universal prosperity. Book XXXV contains chiefly formulae to be used at funeral ceremonies. Books XXXVI-XXXIX contain prayers and formulae to be used at the Pravargya ceremony, preliminary to the Soma sacrifice.

Book XL is a sort of Upanishad not connected directly with any sacrifice.

APPENDIX VII

THE CONTENTS OF THE ATHARVA-VEDA

THE following extract from Griffith's preface to his translation of the Atharva veda will show the general contents of that Veda

'The Atharva-veda Sanhitā or Collection' is divided into twenty *Kāndas*, Books or Sections, containing some 760 hymns and about 6,000 verses. In Books I-VII the hymns or pieces are arranged according to the number of their verses, without any reference to their subjects or the nature of their contents. The hymns of Book I contain on an average four verses each, those of Book II, five, those of III, six, those of IV, seven, those of V, from eight to eighteen, those of VI, three, those of VII, many single verses and upwards to eleven. Books VIII-XX contain longer pieces, some of which extend to fifty, sixty, seventy, and even eighty verses. In Books I-XIII the contents are of the most heterogeneous description with no attempt at any kind of systematic arrangement of subjects. They consist principally of prayers, formulas and charms for protection against evil spirits of all sorts and kinds, against sorcerers and sorceresses, diseases, snakes, and other noxious creatures, of benedictions and imprecations, invocations of magical herbs, prayers for children and long life, for general and special protection and prosperity, success in love, trade

and gambling, together with formulas to be employed in all kinds of domestic occurrences. In books XIV–XVIII the subjects are systematically arranged, XIV treating of marriage ceremonies, XV of the glorification of the *Arātva* or religious wandering mendicant, XVI and XVII of certain conjurations, XVIII of funeral rites and the offering of obsequial cakes to the Manes or spirits of departed ancestors. Book XIX contains a somewhat miscellaneous collection of supplementary hymns. Book XX consists—with the exception of what is called the *Kuntīpa* Section, comprising hymns 127–136—of pieces addressed to Indra and taken entirely from the *Rig-veda*. These two books, which are not noticed in the *Atharva-veda Prātiśīkhya*—a grammatical treatise on the phonetic changes of words in the text—are manifestly a later addition to the collection. Many of the *Atharva* hymns reappear in the *Rig-veda*, about one seventh of the collection, sometimes unchanged and sometimes with important variations, being found in the older compilation. Interspersed in several of the books are pieces of varying length, consisting of curious cosmological and mystico-theological speculations which are not without interest as containing the germs of religious and philosophical doctrines afterwards fully developed in the *Brāhmanas* and *Upanishads*.

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